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PROMOTING SELF-RELIANCE OF THE RURAL POOR IN INDIA

Programme Evaluation ICCO

by

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December 1997



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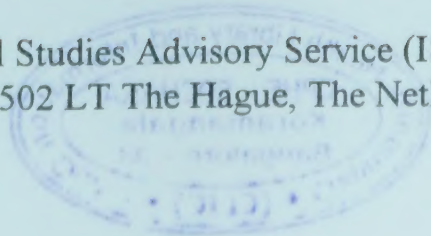
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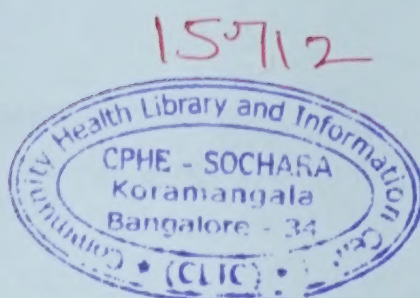
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VOLUME I: SUMMARY

PRESENTATION

This report presents the results of a Programme Evaluation organised around the theme of 'Self Reliance (SR) of the poor at grassroots level in India', more precisely, especially of the rural poor. The PE is intended to find out whether and to what extent SR already constitutes an explicit objective of the relevant agents involved: the men and women at grassroot level, the NGOs, ICCO and the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation; and whether this objective is translated into operational strategies and concrete implementation. The report pulls together the results of research among all these agents, which were gathered with the help of structured interviews, a file study, a survey and case studies in the field. Information on the design of the study, methodology and research instruments can be found in the supporting documents of Volume II.

In accordance with recent guidelines of the Dutch Ministry for reporting on Programme Evaluation, the present summary report tries to maintain an analytical rather than descriptive tone, assess ICCO's performance in this field, and be succinct while focussing on the main results, conclusions and recommendations for policy. This summary report starts with a brief justification of the research theme and identifies the guiding research questions. Then it examines ICCO's views and practices, together with those of its Indian partners, and to a certain extent also those of the Ministry responsible for the supervision of the cofinancing programme. Subsequently the analysis shifts to the core-area: the dynamics of SR at grassroots level, both from the perspective of the communities of the rural poor, and from that of the NGOs working closely with them. The last section sums up the main results and conclusions, and formulates implications for policy.

We are very grateful for the invitation to undertake this programme evaluation. We also thank all those involved in making it possible and helping to carry it out, both in The Netherlands and in India. We owe special thanks, first of all, to the men and women, community members and leaders, from 19 villages in India which had enough patience to sit down with us for some hours, and discuss their experience and their views related to SR; for us, but hopefully also for them, these were good, useful and also pleasurable meetings. We also owe much to the interest and support from the Dutch Ministry, from Mr. Dick Wentink in particular; from ICCO, especially Messrs. Bram van Leeuwen and Berry Roelofs, and their colleagues from the South Asia desk; Ms Janet van der Woude who carried out the file study; the staff of FAIR who helped prepare the fieldwork and case studies, and Seminar II in New Delhi; the staff from SEARCH which helped organise Seminar I in Bangalore; the staff of the four NGO-partners (ASSEFA, CRD, SIRD and THREAD) who helped us do the case studies; and from the members of the Consultative Group (Messrs Bert Helmsing, Jan Neggens and Koen Verhagen) who provided very useful feedback on the design and instruments of the study, and on its reports. We hope that the outcome of this study will serve all of those who contributed to it, in a better understanding of the challenge and dynamics of SR. May it help lay the basis for subsequent discussion and articulation of policies and concrete intervention strategies. Both of us firmly believe that the self-reliance of the poor represents a core value and objective worth pursuing, on a more systematic basis in the future, than happened in the past.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Introduction

1. This Programme Evaluation wants to assess the degree of success regarding the central theme of promotion of self-reliance of targetgroups. Hence it intends to find out (i) how the rural poor in India, NGOs, ICCO and the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation **define** Self-Reliance (SR), possibly including (ii) a 'process of growth towards SR'; (iii) whether already certain **policies, intervention strategies** and **agreements** exist between the agents in this field; (iv) what **factors** seem to influence the growth to SR; and (iv) whether in this process, NGOs and CBOs capitalise current reforms especially **decentralisation** in India.

2. Answers to these questions were obtained through (i) interviews with ICCO and DGIS staff, (ii) a desk-study of files at ICCO, (iii) a questionnaire survey among ICCO's NGO-partners in India, and (iv) four case studies in the field focused on the rural poor and their organisations. All of these research instruments relied on a checklist of possible elements of SR and/or of a process towards SR which was especially developed for this programme evaluation.

II. Main results

3. Interviews, the file study and official documents showed that ICCO does recognise SR of the poor at grassroots level, as an important objective. ICCO staff is notably and explicitly concerned with this issue, during the process of carrying out reviews, fieldvisits, communication and at times also during monitoring and evaluation. Often, it acts as the initiator in getting a discussion and sometimes concrete actions going among its partners. Indeed, it is this concern with SR that motivated ICCO to take the initiative and render it the central theme of this programme evaluation. The interviews showed, too, that ICCO staffmembers work not with one but with different **concepts** of SR and of the process required to achieve it; they also have an understanding of the **factors** which play a role in this process, based on their wide experience. Nonetheless, it became also clear that, so far, ICCO had not yet **defined** nor operationalised SR as an institutional objective, let alone formulated specific **SR policies and strategies**.

4. The NGOs, ICCO's partners, also work with **concepts of SR** and a **SR-process**, which are varied and complex; and they, too, are able to identify a series of **factors** which intervene. All NGOs see SR as an objective, and in the survey most indicated the **intervention strategies** they use to promote it. The latter neither included explicit **agreements** with CBOs from the very start, nor reliance on a participatory Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation System, to effectively help implement SR. Besides, though some NGOs were notably more clear and systematic than others, also at the conceptual level, in general, most NGOs were less consistent in their problematisation and instrumentalisation of SR at the level of the survey, than they were in the **practice** we observed in the case studies. Indeed, in their practical work with community based organisations (CBOs), these NGOs applied a 'logic' which, from a SR point of view, helped develop the basis for a gradual growth of the CBOs towards SR. Below, when analysing the dynamics of SR at grassroots level, this 'logic' will become clear.

5. The Dutch Ministry, responsible for supervising the Dutch Co-Financing Programme, does acknowledge SR as an important objective. But it had not yet developed an operational definition of this concept in its dealing with Co-Financing Agencies like ICCO.

6. Concerning the **concept of SR** expressed by the **rural poor themselves**: most gave a straightforward definition which emphasized only one core element (for example, 'decision-making', 'empowerment', 'bargaining capacity', 'skills'). An element based on an organised group rather than an individual. Often this element was the same, or came close to, (one of the) elements of SR mentioned by 'their' NGO, and thus helped differentiate both CBOs and NGOs. Hence, CBOs engaged in an 'empowerment' strategy, focussed on accessing government programmes,

emphasized in their SR definition both internal and external elements. CBOs involved in an 'integral-development' strategy--including both empowerment and CBO-initiated development schemes (irrigation, leasing-in land, small agro-industries, etc)--tended to emphasize internal elements, viz. organisation as well as technical and accounting skills.

7. Poor rural women, like the NGOs accompanying them, often had a concept of SR which differed somewhat from that of the men: they tended to stress **internal** rather than external elements of SR, such as 'having a clear idea who you are and would like to become', 'boldness' and 'courage'. But for them, too, getting organised was a precondition for personal advancement.

8. CBOs and/or special committees were involved in a whole range of NGO-initiated **intervention strategies**, many of which were started **before** SR became an issue, and which were **not** (yet) explicitly related to SR. Under the pragmatic 'logic' of an NGO-guided process, poor rural communities got organised; the awareness and self-confidence of men and women were raised; leaders and specialised cadre trained; the capacity for conflict-resolution, and for planning, monitoring and evaluation developed; the community's ability was improved to mobilise both internal and external resources, to independently access government programmes and banks, and to develop and manage its own community fund, often with the assistance of newly formed apex-organisations or federations; and CBOs progressively absorbed NGO and government schemes, assets and roles which were transferred to the CBO as a whole and/or to its special committees. During recent years, too, poor communities and their first and second level organisations are succeeding in getting an increasing number of their independent candidates elected to local panchyats and even higher platforms. Note that it is only later that all of these elements, so characteristic of an NGO approach to grassroots development in southern countries in general, became somehow linked by Indian NGOs to the promotion of SR, though often not yet, as we saw, in a very coherent manner.

9. Notable differences were found at grassroots level between those communities where the NGO had announced its SR objective and process **from the very start**, and others where this happened only much later, during programme implementation. The former had accepted and internalised SR much more than the latter, which often--despite a gradual transfer of schemes, assets and roles--still evidenced their dependency on the NGO. However, the NGO's use of a '**stage approach**' to demarcate, often together with the CBO, that the end of one stage was reached and another one initiated, did help to increase awareness of the need for, and viability of, SR; indeed, especially when communities were declared to have reached the **status** of being 'autonomous' (vis à vis the NGO), this did help to promote feelings among leaders and members of independence, achievement and even pride.

10. Unfortunately, as noted, we found **neither agreements** between NGOs and CBOs on SR, **nor the use of a participatory PMES** (Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation System). Both could have helped to jointly programme, monitor and evaluate the process of growth towards SR, in a relationship of transparency and mutual accountability.

11. The **length** of the NGOs' intervention cycles at grassroots level, leading to self-reliant communities, varied considerably, from six to fifteen years. An 'empowerment' or 'access' strategy tended to take fewer years than an 'integral-development' strategy. However, the learning process which NGOs report in the survey and which enables them to shorten the intervention cycle while still obtaining the same results, under both strategies, was visible at grassroots level. 'Newer' or outreach areas where NGOs started their cycle afresh, tended to move rapidly; both an experienced NGO and a second-level organisation of CBOs were there to accelerate the process.

12. Some **factors** influencing the process of growth towards SR are contextual, including the varying but on the whole disappointing application of decentralisation reforms, and the existence of popular organisations like unions and producer associations. Other factors according to NGOs have to do with the grassroots. Women, small farmers and semi-urban workers are generally seen as achieving SR more rapidly. Tribals, too, especially when still retaining their own identity,

cohesion and collective assets, are perceived as having comparative advantages; placed outside the caste system, it appears to be possible even for dispersed tribal families without any collective resources to rapidly come together and form cohesive communities. Communities heterogeneous in terms of caste, ethnicity and class face special difficulties in growing self-reliant, as conflicts arise which need adequate solutions.

III. Conclusions

13. Formulating the conclusions briefly in terms of the guiding research questions, the following answers can be formulated:

(1) None of the agents involved--neither ICCO nor the NGOs, Dutch Ministry and the rural poor themselves--had and applied a clear, agreed and operational concept of SR. Whatever definitions existed, varied both among and between agents.

(2) All agents have a notion of 'growth towards SR' and of 'stages', even though the notions of the nature and length of the process, and about the character and number of stages, vary notably.

(3) None of the agents has a specific SR policy or intervention strategy. ICCO does have a great interest in SR and in developing such a policy, and has been thinking about it. Likewise, NGOs and CBOs do possess a rich experience in promoting grassroots development *de facto* implying SR; however, this experience has not yet been conceptualised or organised in terms of a process towards SR. In the course of this process, quite a few components have emerged which can be considered relevant material for a SR strategy. The NGOs, like ICCO staff, have also identified a set of factors which influence the process of growth towards SR, at the level of context, the NGO and the grassroots.

(4) ICCO and its partners, the NGOs and CBOs, do discuss SR as an object of policy but, so far, mostly in an uneven and unsystematic manner. No agreements have yet been formulated, nor has SR been made an objective handled through a Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation System.

(5) In view of the highly uneven but in most cases very limited implementation of a decentralisation policy in India, few among ICCO's partners have been able to capitalise such a reform for purposes of promoting SR.

IV. Implications for Policy

14. For purposes of policy making and clear understanding, a **common concept of SR** is needed. We propose that SR be defined as 'the capacity of a community to manage its own affairs'¹. Unpacked in terms of indicators, this concept of SR includes the capacity for decision-making, applying a PMES to its development activities, resolving internal conflicts, organising internal and promoting external resource mobilisation, and for maintaining a sustainable level of participation.

15. ICCO should elaborate a transparent SR policy, intervention strategy and instruments, preferably in consultation with other donor agencies. This policy should be discussed with its NGO partners in India and other countries. The NGOs, in turn, where possible jointly with CBOs, should formulate viable and operational SR policies and intervention strategies, differentiated, where needed, in accordance with context, kind of programme and grassroots group. ICCO, NGO-partners and CBOs should try to formulate agreements in this area, from the very start, accepting SR as a joint and specific guideline, and work SR systematically into their programmes of activities elaborated with the help of PMES, with their corresponding indicators, stages and timeframes.

¹ It will be noted that this concept approximates rather closely that given by the grassroots themselves.

CHAPTER 1 SELF RELIANCE AS A CHALLENGE: TOWARDS GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1 Self-Reliance as a challenge

The Co-Financing Programme Agreement of the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation and ICCO itself consider the self-reliance (SR) of poor targetgroups as an important objective; this is explicitly stated in the Terms of Reference for the present Programme Evaluation (ps 1-2). The Ministry and ICCO are both interested in seeing whether and to what extent this shared objective is handled and being achieved in practice, and how policy-making in this area--and hence the Co-Financing Programme as a whole--can be improved. ICCO in particular is expected to benefit from a better understanding of this problematic, in its discussions and relations with its counterparts during the whole project cycle (ToR:2). In this connection, interest exists in the extent to (and areas in) which, ICCOs partners are able to effectively promote SR among their targetgroups (p.2).

Basically, it is rather surprising that interest in this strategic concept and objective arises at such a late stage. Insofar as we were able to ascertain, practically no research and previous work has been done on this subject, in the context of grassroots development. There is no ready-made framework or 'state of the art'; hence the present effort needs to develop its own frame of reference, methods and instruments. In order to know in what direction to turn in doing so, an effort has to be made to problematise SR, where possible on the basis of the rather limited experience of those directly involved in the field and the study. Later work can then reject, revise or further develop these initial ideas: there will be something concrete to build on, whether positively or negatively.

Problematizing the research question to some extent, the impression exists that self-reliance (SR) is recognised everywhere as a desirable objective in NGO interventions vis à vis the poor, but that in practice it represents a challenge which is both complex and hard to meet. The number of NGOs which have succeeded in rendering, from the very start, SR and the gradual 'withdrawal' from--or the redefinition of their relationship with--the poor with whom they have been working, into a crucial part of their overall intervention strategy, is probably quite limited. Paternalism and dependency relationships may and probably do exist beyond what would be desirable. Desirable from various points of view: the need for and right to autonomy of the organised poor themselves; their own empowerment and process of emancipation; and the sustainability of project results. But there is also the enhanced efficiency in the use of the NGO's scarce resources; the possibility to utilise its installed capacity for a reiterated and possibly abbreviated intervention cycle among new poor communities not yet attended; as well as for other kinds of intervention at the level of those communities already marked as 'autonomous'.

However, fear among NGOs of losing financial resources and weaken prospects for their own continuity; affectionate and ideological commitments of NGO staff to particular poor families and communities; unfamiliarity with (or even the relative lack of) methodologies facilitating a gradual 'withdrawal' or redefinition of roles; pressures from poor communities themselves; vicissitudes and unpredictability, indeed, the lack of unilinearity of development; these and other factors probably make NGOs hesitate and face obstacles in the complex process towards SR of the poor. However that may be, despite the admittedly crucial importance of this objective, we still know very little about this strategic problem area. Hence, policies of financing agencies and NGOs often remain informed more by principle than codified experience, more by solemn wishes than by verified practice. Also, in the continuing dialogue between agencies and counterparts, counterparts and CBOs, the legitimacy of the objective of SRs may be raised, but it is rarely made the subject of an agreed joint and systematic search for viable ways to try achieving it.

In the context of present policies of decentralisation in many southern countries, which seek to strengthen civic society, and to promote enabling government and participatory development, especially at the local level, the SR of urban and rural poor may well receive a new impetus, also

in India. Can shifts be observed in the strategies and behaviour of CBOs and NGOs accompanying them?

1.2 Towards a concept of self-reliance: guiding research questions

These and other queries justify a study into the problem and dynamics of SR as here intended by ICCO's programme evaluation. But before such a study is viable, certain questions must be raised. First of all, what is needed, as a baseline, is a working definition of SR which is transparent and consistent enough to 'make sense' and guide interviews, desk studies and fieldwork. The preliminary definition provided in the ToR of this Programme evaluation has emphasized the capacity of targetgroups for autonomous decision-making, depending, in turn, on their ability to get and maintain their own organisation, access to services and enjoy a minimum economic standard of living. This initial definition is very generic, however, and further conceptual reflection and elaboration is needed. For one thing, it would be a pity to foreclose the chance to identify the NGOs' and targetgroups' **own** definitions of 'self-reliance'; they may well see other elements (or other combinations of elements) as basic to SR, and/or other (pre)conditions; for example, a clear sense of identity and assertiveness, effective external linkages, a capacity to formulate and agree of common objectives, and so on. 'Effectiveness', 'emancipation' or 'survival' may be among the salient but divergent motives shaping the frames of reference of financing agencies, NGOs and grassroots. So we will **not** yet define SR at this stage and in a preliminary way², in order to accomodate possibly different perspectives. For another, we would need a more concrete and operational set of tools--elements and/or indicators of self-reliance--which can be utilised as a kind of 'checklist' and notational device when investigating files, scrutinising and comparing actual policies and practices, and drawing profiles of NGOs and grassroot groups in terms of possible dimensions of self-reliance, and their gradual growth towards a more self-reliant condition. SR will only be defined afterwards, after such dimensions are better known.

From this perspective, that is, recognising the need for an open and operational framework for the analysis of dimensions and dynamics of self-reliance, it seems preferable to set up a broad and wide-ranging 'checklist' of possible elements (including those referred to in the ToR), which may be connected with self-reliance under different modalities and trayectories. Actual data will then show whether and to what extent the views and instruments of different agents (policy makers of the Ministry, ICCO staff, NGO staff and grassroot groups) coincide, what criteria and indicators (if any) guide their decision-making, what kinds of NGOs and grassroot groups seem to make more progress towards self-reliance and which ones less, and in what areas. Having a more or less systematic 'checklist' of possible elements of self-reliance available, will help: it can be applied to different research instruments (such as interviews, file study, survey etc) and help find answers to our research questions in an integrated manner.

In reality, the agents' own definitions--to the extent that they have more than an intuitive one--will probably be limited to a selection from the list of all possible SR-elements in the 'checklist'. Yet the latter will help us draw a profile of the agents' concept of SR, its dynamics and preconditions; facilitate registration of data; and allow us later to compare the agents' points of view, definitions, intervention strategies and so on.

But what exactly has to go into the making of such a matrix or check-list of relevant elements or indicators of SR? What is involved? Firstly, whose SR are we talking about: poor households, the young, women, a group's CBO or of the NGO/CP's? From ICCO's own document on the PE, clearly, SR has **not** been defined as a property of the NGO, but of the grassroots, possibly including their Community Based Organisation (CBO). That is, the programme evaluation (PE) intends to examine whether and the extent to which both ICCO, its direct partners and the end-beneficiaries themselves actually think about, strive for and promote SR of the poor (ToR, p.2-3). Secondly, at what level

² For our definition of SR emerging from the analysis, see no's 44 and 45 at the end of this report.

(p.3) do we examine SR: at that of individuals, households or organisations of the poor (say CBOs)? Methodologically speaking, it is very difficult (technically, economically and timewise) to cover all levels in one single study. Though some effort can and should be made to also study SR differentially and look at different people at household level, for example, at women in relation to their husbands and family, it may not be easy to keep such differences in level in sight in a systematic manner, that is, speak simultaneously of 'self-reliance of individual persons' and self-reliance of 'the' poor, of 'informal producers', a 'women association' and so on. At this stage, it may be more expedient--given our present lack of knowledge of the subject--to focus more (though not exclusively) on the SR of poor groups and their CBOs. This is also important because of the approach characteristic of many NGOs. They focus on the empowerment of the poor, by organising them c.q. strengthening their organisation. In many ways, such an organisation becomes a precondition for the poor's own space and expression of interests and needs; for their access to resources and related decision-making; and for being heard and included in wider society; in a nutshell (as happened in ICCO's own concept of SR): organisation as a precondition for their self-reliance.

A third preliminary question: is this 'SR of poor grassroots groups' a static condition, or a dynamic process, that is, something that grows over time, owing to a process of focussed actions and learning? Presumably, SR is not a static end-result, but refers to a property or characteristic to be reached after a--possibly staged--process of 'growth towards SR' (as measured by a number of indicators). From this point of view, SR would appear to be an evolving but preferably sustainable characteristic which allows the organised poor to 'carry on by themselves', without any longer a direct and close intervention of the NGO,--even though some remote support may well continue.

A last point. As noted, of great importance also is the **operational** definition of SR as an objective and process. The definition of SR unavoidably brings out the underlying concept agents have of 'the development of the poor'. What does this 'development' consist of? How does it relate to their 'growth towards self-reliance': is the latter maybe defined as reaching first some basic and then possibly a higher level, which allow the organised poor to progressively develop themselves and their potential, in the context of mainstream society? Will we find something vaguely resembling a shift in SR from a survival towards a growth-oriented process of development? Of interest, too, in this connection, are the strategies and interventions deemed necessary to bring about such types of 'development'; the (presumably successive) stages and project cycle(s) involved, maybe differentiated in accordance with elements of SR; and the contextual and possibly other factors identified as conducive or impeding such a development.

These definitions and views on the desirable level, strategy and process of SR must obviously be examined as they exist on the part of the various immediate stakeholders: the poor themselves (including relevant subgroups like women and younger people), the NGO-partners, ICCO and the Dutch Ministry (DGIS). These agents may well differ notably in their concept of SR and in the extent to which SR represents a salient issue in their thinking, policy and behaviour; indeed, probably we find differences not just between type of agent but also among NGOs and among poor groups. Just note, for example, that SR for a micro-enterprise consists of its survival capacity in the market place, something far removed from a women's movement which seeks to maintain its autonomy from men, parties and others who seek to influence it. Besides, the significance and notion of SR itself will probably also vary along with the type of poor group involved. A neighbourhood council or panchayat committee must meet certain demands of formality; movements of youth, tribals or women, in contrast, are often more keen to keep the movement united and active than whether it conforms to formal criteria. Finding out about such differences (and their possible causes) is, by itself, already important. The checklist to map such different profiles must be sufficiently flexible not to (a priori) exclude them. A mechanistic and rigid approach in this connection would fail to do justice to the complexity of the subject and the many ways in which SR may be expressed and sought for.

But we should go one step further. What should be examined is not just what definitions they hold of SR and related strategies (if any), but also whether they have discussed and agreed on them,

amongst themselves? Has SR reached, or not (yet), the status of an explicit goal to be jointly attained within a given period of time? And then: how specific are these definitions and views? Just left at the level of generalities and an overall objective? Or already specified with some level of concreteness or even measurability via indicators of SR? Do the poor, NGOs and ICCO already work with and apply any specific (agreed) indicators to measure change and progress in the process of 'growth towards SR'? Are there procedures in place among the stakeholders, to monitor and evaluate progress in the 'growth towards SR'? That is, is SR not just a matter of programming but also of reporting, evaluation and so on? And, finally, can something be said about the factors distinguishing successful and unsuccessful cases of SR? Did the NGO really modify its role vis à vis the CBOs in accordance with stage of SR? Did it 'withdraw' completely or was its connection with grassroots groups only modified in some way? Do ICCO, NGO, the poor and their CBOs have any (possibly joint) analysis or discussion on these topics? What lessons have been learnt? The frame of reference and related checklist of SR elements and indicators that was eventually produced especially for this programme evaluation can be found in Volume II.

Summarising the **research questions** raised in the discussion so far, going beyond the initial baseline provided in the Terms of Reference, we get the following:

- (1) do all parties involved (ICCO, DGIS, NGOs/CPs, the poor and their CBOs) have and already apply a more general and maybe even operational **concept of SR**, its elements and indicators? if so, how to they define SR?
- (2) do these agents have a notion of **process**, of 'growth towards SR' and possibly of **stages** through which the poor and their CBOs have to pass before reaching it, possibly differentiated in accordance with elements of SR?
- (3) do these agents have **specific policies and intervention strategies** to promote SR? What lessons are being learnt in this field? Also, are **factors** being identified which influence the success or failure of efforts to promote SR among the poor and their CBOs?
- (4) do these agents discuss SR as a joint and **agreed objective** of policy, especially ICCO with its NGO/CPs and the NGO/CPs with 'their' targetgroups/CBOs? Are concrete **agreements** or commitments made, also at the level of **PMES**?
- (5) are present **reforms** (especially decentralisation) in India being capitalised to promote the SR of poor groups and their CBOs?

CHAPTER 2 ICCO AND SELF-RELIANCE

On the basis of structured interviews with ICCO staff (South Asia desk), ICCO documents and the file study, good evidence was found of ICCO's concern with SR of grassroots groups i.c. the rural poor. Such SR is consistently expressed both in ICCO's discussions and communication with its partners, and in its fieldvisits and seminars which it helped organise.

That ICCO staff had given the matter a good deal of thought became quite clear; Volume II provides an overview of the most important points in connection with the definition of SR as an objective, SR-oriented strategies and with factors which in its view played a role in that process. It also became evident that so far no consensus exists amongst the staff, and that concepts vary from more 'organisational-political' to more 'economic' and even to more 'sociopsychological' views of SR.

ICCO staff offered a rich overview of contextual, institutional and CBO-related factors which, in its experience and from its helicopter perspective, play a role in the process of 'growth towards SR'. Indeed, rather than considering SR as a static-generic phenomenon, ICCO's staff tended to emphasize SR as a process, proceeding in two to three stages.

The variety of views among staff also brings out the lack of an institutional definition of SR as an objective, and the still 'experimental' or even pragmatic use of definitions and instruments. It is rather surprising, given the strategic nature of SR in the promotion of grassroots work, that agencies like ICCO have not yet defined a specific SR policy. To our knowledge, there are hardly, if any, private agencies extant which already possess and actually apply such a policy. Indeed, ICCO is very interested in using the results of the present programme evaluation to systematize its work in this area.

Interviews with officials of the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation responsible for monitoring and supervising the Dutch Co-Financing Programme, also showed an interest in SR as a stated general objective. But the Ministry, too, has, so far, no specific SR policy and instruments available in its dealings with the Co-Financing Agencies.

CHAPTER 3 NGOS AND SELF-RELIANCE

Leaving a fuller presentation of the NGOs' views and practices to Volume II, here we limit the discussion to a brief summary of the main points³.

Most NGOs in the survey (87.5%) acknowledged SR as a general objective, but notably fewer (56.2%) as a specific objective. Defining SR in terms of various elements, ranging primarily from those with an institutional nature (self-management, autonomous organisation, capacity for PMES, human resource base), to more attitudinal elements (assertiveness, awareness of own origins & achievements) or a combination thereof, they often tended to replicate the different views found among ICCO staff. They also identified the elements of SR-focused intervention strategies which they applied, such as awareness-raising & organisation, building up institutions and management capacities, economic development and collaborative action, all at the level of programmes and/or communities rather than individuals. The rather striking thing, here, is that often these strategies were not clearly related, indeed, were often inconsistent with, the way in which SR was pursued in practice⁴. This suggests that though a few did manage to develop a clear and consistent view and strategy of SR also at the conceptual level, most NGOs appeared to not yet having problematised and strategised SR conceptually, in a coherent and transparent way.

Quite a few NGOs (75%) referred to (sets of) SR-indicators whether related to a 'terminal' point in an intervention cycle, or to the end of a stage of this cycle, reached after a certain number of years⁵. Interestingly enough, these NGOs were capable of articulating their longer-term development strategy and goals, and of 'working backwards' from such goals towards where they were at present. Most partners of ICCO (72.8%) perceived two or three stages in the process of growth towards SR, lasting together between five and 15 years. Nonetheless, many (87.5%) reported that thanks to a learning process, they were able to abbreviate their intervention cycle--reaching the same or even better results in a shorter period of time--and were able to modify their relationship with those poor communities which had become 'independent' or 'autonomous' once the cycle had been completed. According to the data from the survey and case studies, though many NGOs applied a PMES (often in a participatory manner), only very few utilised it to systematically programme, monitor and evaluate the progressive SR of the grassroots, nor did many rely, from the very start, on more or less formal agreements with CBOs in the field of SR.

The factors which in their view influenced the process of growth towards SR⁶, included conditions as the macro level (e.g. political space for NGOs and autonomous CBOs, effective decentralisation policies), meso level (viz. the NGOs' own capacity, experience and transparency, and the kind of programme implemented) and micro level (especially the nature of the grassroots, its resources,

³ The sources for this summary consist of: (i) the results of the file study covering 35 NGOs, (ii) a survey among some 82 partner NGOs all over India, 47 of whom returned the questionnaire (though not always carefully filled in), (iii) structured interviews with staff of four partners selected for the case studies, and (iv) two seminars in India with some 50 NGOs, scheduled after the case studies were completed.

⁴ For example, promoting autonomous organisations, improving relationships with authorities, helping build apex-organisations, and transferring programmes and roles to CBOs, in practice represented strategic elements of the NGOs' intervention strategy, yet these either occupied a low rank or even disappeared in those formulated in the survey, 'verbalised'

⁵ For data see tables 21a, 21b and 22 in Volume II, Chapter 5. It is worthy of note that only 47.9% reported that CBOs could 'stand on their own feet', while one third (33.3%) indicated that CBOs 'needed to go back' to the NGO for further support. Such indicators are reminiscent of the 'majority index' used by the Aga Khan Foundation.

⁶ See especially table 28 of Chapter 5 (Vol.II). The discussion here is based also on case studies and the two seminars in India after the fieldwork was completed.

entrepreneurial skills, gender⁷). Other intervening factors especially connected with the NGOs' intervention strategies are referred to below in the discussion of the 'logic' they follow in their work with CBOs.

A last but quite strategic point relates to this 'logic'. Most of ICCO's partners may not yet have worked out at the conceptual level a fully clear and coherent SR concept and strategy. But *in practice* things were different. From what we learned from the file study and during fieldwork and seminars, was that the NGOs in practice do follow a 'logic' in their work with grassroots organisations which helps lay an effective basis for SR, or, put in different words, effectively implies a progressive building up of self-reliant CBOs. Through their work in organising and empowering poor communities; developing their human, financial and other resource base; helping them to develop their capacity for drawing up and executing plans including monitoring and evaluation; promoting the formation of apex organisations; linking them to local authorities in order to access government programmes; and teaching them how to bargain with officials, landlords, traders and politicians; through all these NGO interventions whereby they progressively leave the initiative to the communities, the CBOs are succeeding in standing on their own feet, while improving the satisfaction of their basic needs, their income and assets. This 'typical' NGO scenario, familiar in many countries of the South, though not yet systematised under a perspective of SR, nevertheless implies an effective and often staged SR strategy. A strategy which in the end produces 'autonomous' communities and associations thereof.

It is quite likely, however, that were such NGO *practice* better codified and systematised from a SR point of view, the effectiveness **and** efficiency of NGOs could be notably improved. Especially the success achieved by NGOs which build SR explicitly into their programme from the very start, and which through a participatory and transparent planning process render 'growth towards SR' a joint objective, needs to be brought out as a SR-strategy which may well be applied more widely in the context of different programmes. A closely related observation refers to a clear and possibly accelerated process of transferring schemes, roles and assets to CBOs; that is, a programmed shift in the role of the NGO, from one taking the lead towards one of supporting or enabling the work of CBOs. As the case studies suggest and wider experience shows, such strategies may help convert SR from an NGO-induced objective into one internalised by the CBO.

⁷ Interestingly enough, according to what the NGOs reported in the survey with regard to the achievements of 'targetgroups', they did better on 'internal' elements of SR (viz. PMES, autonomous organisation, assertiveness, awareness of their own potential, self identity) than on 'external' elements (such as external recognition and handling external relationships); cfr. table 29 of Chapter 5 (Vol. II). For an interesting assessment by the NGOs of grassroots achievements by gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic groups, see table 30.

CHAPTER 4 CBOS AND SELF-RELIANCE

4.1 Introduction

Whereas structured interviews served as the research instrument for officials from ICCO and the Dutch Ministry, and a questionnaire as the vehicle to get information from ICCO's NGO-partners, case studies in the field were singled out as the best instrument to approach the rural poor themselves at grassroots level. After all, they do play the key role in the process of growth towards self reliance (SR). Hence, the central focus in the case studies was on the rural communities, not on ICCO's partners. This fieldwork report reflects that focus: a conscious effort has been made to put the communities in center-stage. Nevertheless, the NGOs do come in, but primarily from the perspective of their relationship with the grassroots and with regard to the promotion of SR.

In previous discussions with Ministry and ICCO officials preference was given to partner-NGOs with integrated rural development programmes: these represent by far the most important partners of ICCO in India. Another important selection criterion was to get some variation amongst the NGOs in terms of clarity of SR concept and intervention strategy (the 'dependent variables'). This generated a matrix with four cases, selected with the help of an assessment made by ICCO staff and the results of the file study. A further basis of differentiation was sought in terms of some 'independent variables' considered relevant: macro context and the kind of grassroots group involved. Context was varied by selecting cases from very poor states (Bihar and Orissa) in the North, and from comparatively more advanced states (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) in the South. The rural poor were differentiated by selecting cases where NGOs were working with tribals, with (tribal or other) women, with outcastes and/or scheduled classes. Altogether, 19 communities were visited and collective interviews scheduled, in addition to interviews with leaders of apex organisations.

The collective interviews with the communities brought together some 15-40 men and women, leaders and members; the interviews lasted from two to three hours. Where possible relying also on the 'SR checklist', an effort was made to find answers systematically to these questions on SR and the concrete situation in which the community and NGO were trying to move ahead and (explicitly or **de facto**) promoting the community's SR. Topics of discussion included: the history of the community, especially its contact and dealings with the NGO; the organisation and roles of the CBO (and possible committees), in setting up, administering and financing development activities in various areas (community fund, communal health programme etc); the practice of planning, monitoring and evaluation in the community, and the mobilisation of internal and external resources; relations and bargaining with government agencies, landlords and traders; the development of assets at communal and household level; and the emergence of apex-associations. Self-reliance was an issue throughout but particularly during the last part of the interview. People were asked where the community now found itself in its dealings with the NGO, after a given number of years; whether SR had ever been discussed with the NGO, and if so, when and at who's initiative; the meaning and weight of SR, and what it implies; whether the community thought that the support of the NGO was still needed and, if so, why, for what number of years and for what purpose.

In the field, during an initial discussion with NGO staff on their programme and SR strategy (if any), at least four communities were selected, on the basis of the following criteria: (i) firstly, 'new' and 'older' communities, the former representing cases where the NGO had just started, the latter communities where the NGO had already been working for a longer time (from 5 to 12 years) and including—where available—'autonomous' communities; this contrast helped us to grasp the nature and effectiveness of the NGO's intervention cycle, also from a SR perspective; (ii) the social characteristics of a community, for example, its composition in terms of tribals, harijans and/or scheduled class; and (iii) gender (presence of women programme). An effort was made to keep social and gender criteria 'constant', that is, identify a pair of communities with the same social or

gender composition but differing with regard to being either ‘new’ or ‘older’ communities. Where possible we also interviewed leaders of apex-associations.

It should be noticed that the communities we visited were rather homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and caste (only tribal, only harijan etc.) though subcastes did exist. Obviously, homogeneity plays an important role in a CBO’s growth towards SR, and the management of internal heterogeneity we found presents CBO leadership and NGOs with notable problems. The selection of communities, however, does not allow us to delve into this problem in a more systematic way, and as a result it must be left for later studies.

Below, the practice and views of the grassroots communities and of the NGOs working with them are briefly summarised. Instead of presenting four case studies individually, let alone describe the NGOs involved in some detail, an effort is made to keep the focus on the grassroots, while dealing with the guiding research questions. That is, examine their experiences, problems, opportunities and process in the field of SR, and so help draw a map of issues in this field, for future discussion and dialogue. The map which resulted from the fieldstudy will be drawn up below. It is organised around the research questions underlying this study.

4.2 The concept of self-reliance

Grassroots people--both leaders and members of the communities, men and women--provided **general** and single-element answers to the questions what is SR (see Table 1).

Table 5.1

Definitions of self-reliance as offered by grassroots community members ⁸	
1. solve/manage own affairs	5
2. own decision-making	5
3. skills (savings cap’y, knowledge, PMES, accounts, write properly)	5
4. cap’y to negotiate with gov’t	4
5. unity (with other castes etc)	3
6. take over from NGO	3
7. organisation, leadership	1
8. courage	1
9. independence from landlord	1
10. equality men and women	1
11. no children in need of parents anymore	1
12. no idea, do not yet understand	3
Total	33

These generic answers formulated in terms of one **single** element of SR, contrast with the **lists** of SR elements offered by ICCO and NGO staff. They capture the element of, if not search for, autonomy, the perceived requisites therefore and/or the expressions thereof. Typically such autonomy is pitched at the level of the group, not personal ‘self’.

It is rather striking that these definitions hardly vary along with a growing number of years that communities work with NGOs: ‘newer’ and ‘older’ NGOs tend to converge in the way they define SR. This suggests either that the communities’ own understanding of SR does not deepen over the years, or, rather, that the NGOs have begun only recently to discuss this concept as an objective with the communities; as we know from survey data, there are grounds to assume the latter⁹.

⁸ As often more answers were given than one per community, the total exceeds 19

⁹ See page 36 of Volume II

Instead, there is a certain degree of 'vertical' affinity between communities and NGOs. For example, where an NGO emphasizes 'decision-making', community members more often do likewise. Where an NGO strongly relies on a 'political' strategy empowering the communities in their claim-making capacity vis à vis government programmes and banks, community members tend to define SR in terms of capacity to negotiate with officials. This, in turn, may mean that when NGOs begin to act as the initiators of the process towards SR--and we know from the survey that in most cases they rather than the communities take the lead--they do succeed in transmitting their concept of SR to the grassroots level.

There is some evidence to assume that the binomium 'NGO x community' expresses itself also in other ways. Consider the difference between NGOs applying an 'integral' development strategy with those relying on an 'empowerment' or access strategy. The former act upon the basis of an integral strategy which in addition to empowering communities in relation to government programmes and banks, helps them to develop their own creativity and initiative in utilising their local resource base (forest, water, land, skills etc) and to also mobilise external inputs (technical assistance, finance) to develop such resources. In this case one finds the tendency among community members to define SR largely in terms of 'internal' organisation and skills. Where NGOs strongly if not exclusively stress an 'access' or empowerment strategy, linking the organised poor to existing government programmes targeted at the poor, SR tends to be defined both in 'internal' terms (getting organised, having leadership) and in capacity to negotiate with officials.

Below, when discussing SR intervention strategies we will discuss another dimension of SR as a concept and objective: the extent to which community members embrace SR as a matter of pride and achievement of their own, and not just as an extension of an NGO's philosophy. Suffice it to note at this stage that though the **concept** of SR may not necessarily change, the **emotional** and self-attached **loading** of SR among members of the community does undergo a significant shift: it is no longer a cerebral-external subject but becomes an internalised value, motivating community members in their relationship with the NGO and other external agents. Indeed, we should not forget that it is the latter meaning of SR which is at stake, really, not the encyclopedic definition thereof.

4.3 Intervention strategies to promote self-reliance: the practical 'logic' of NGOs

As we have seen in the survey, when it comes to articulating specific and operational SR-intervention strategies, the NGOs have not yet thought this problem through. Many inconsistencies remain between SR as a general and/or specific objective, on the one hand, and the operational strategies and programmes used to achieve those objectives, on the other. Nonetheless, despite this lack of clarity and coherence at the conceptual level, in practice NGOs demonstrated a good measure of 'logic' in promoting SR or the conditions for it, on the part of the grassroots groups they work with. Here this 'logic' will be followed through, by focussing successively on different practical components, looked at from the perspective of the grassroots and their SR. We will use this review also to raise some questions which might help to structure the agenda of future work in this field.

4.3.1 *Organising the poor*

Clearly, for some time now NGOs have been in the business of organising the poor, indeed, that is what they are good at. For decades this has been the NGOs' principal practice: raising awareness; training members, cadres and leaders of local communities; helping them to develop skills in participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, in communication and conflict resolution; setting up, developing and administering their own community fund and other collective assets; and in getting themselves formally recognised and duly equipped with statutes and bylaws. This basic NGO

scenario for organising the poor has been implemented for quite some years¹⁰. It served as the basis for the external representation and defense of their collective interests, in relation to panchayat officials, BDO, bankers, police, landlords and so on. Indeed, by now an (unknown) number of CBOs have reached the point where they already are able to carry on by themselves, both in managing communal assets and facilities, and in the field of external relations. Yet this process of organisation has often taken place **without** being explicitly associated with a SR intervention strategy: it was and still is the basic thing to do.

In all the cases studied, the effectiveness of this process of organising the poor is clearly visible, particularly when one compares the 'newer' with the 'older' communities. There are notable differences between them in terms of: --self-confidence and degree of articulateness in voicing views, criticism and demands; --in the communities' capacity to mobilise public entitlements (roads, schools, streetlights, bus-stop, wells for drinking water, subsidised houses, irrigation tanks, compensation for invalidity, etc etc) for the whole collectivity and individual households; --in the apex-associations which are emerging, sometimes up to district and even higher levels; and, lastly, -also quite tangibly in the results of local elections where thanks to joint efforts of communities and networks they succeeded in getting their own independent candidates elected, both in reserved and in general seats. Such a strategy of empowerment is viable and quite effective in India, as in few other southern countries. But, once more, this was and still is a strategy of NGOs which had started already before SR appeared as an issue on the agenda.

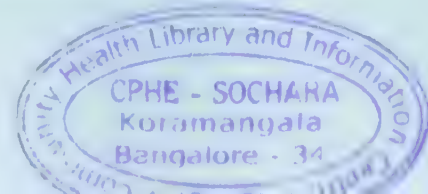
Some NGOs and 'their' grassroots organisations at present are reaching the stage where the latter have become, or are becoming, 'autonomous' or 'independent', and where the CBO and NGO begin to modify their relationship. Note that the length of their cycle of **direct** intervention varies considerably, from five to twelve or even fifteen years. But--as we know from the survey data--it is accompanied by a self-reported learning process which is helping the NGOs to reduce the total timespan: CBOs reaching the same results in a shorter period of time. In the fieldstudy, however, we found only a few instances where communities had already reached the status of being 'autonomous'; where schemes, assets and roles had already been largely transferred to the CBOs and/or specialised committees; and where the NGO was entering new communities, while working at the same time with the apex-organisations of the old communities.

4.3.2 Human resource development

Human resource development is, of course, a principal instrument in any SR strategy. All NGOs examined are involved in it. In general, they did not dispose of technical specialists among their staff, most of whom were generalists with considerable experience in handling, and teaching on, matters of grassroots mobilisation and organisation. For handling or training on technical subjects NGOs often relied on professionals or specialists from government agencies, educational institutions, consultants or other NGOs. This was obviously more a necessity for NGOs which applied an 'integral' development strategy than for those following an 'empowerment' strategy. The grassroots themselves, both members and leadership, invariably attached great importance to training, including ongoing training, even where communities were already (declared) 'autonomous': it was one of 'the' key areas where they expected NGOs to (continue to) contribute directly or indirectly. Indeed, one may wonder whether the NGOs are already able to do enough in this connection.

NGOs and CBOs handled training differentially: sometimes efforts were focussed on forming specialised committees especially schooled in, say, handling credit programmes, a health scheme,

¹⁰ Of course, this sound easy but in practice presents difficult challenges. Especially the recruitment, training and also the control of leaders who have an indispensable role to play in the developmental process, is a problematic area. Often originating not from the poorest layers of communities, their position may or may not be used to the members' optimal benefit. Another area: the level and kind of organisational demands increase as one moves from an empowerment function towards the provision of basic services and income and employment generation.



school or irrigation channel; these committees then were supervised by and reported to the assembly. Other times NGOs and CBOs followed a collective approach, not wishing that only a few learned special skills. The advantages of the former, specialised, option seem obvious, especially when combined (as sometimes happened) with networking between these committees, for purposes of further upgrading, joint purchase of inputs and so on. Yet the wish of the community, especially in the early stages of the cycle, to retain control is strong. From this perspective, socialised knowledge and skills are maintained as crucial instruments facilitating shared control, considered particularly important where community funds are concerned. Further discussion and data is needed to throw more light on this question of methodology because it is quite relevant from a SR point of view.

4.3.3 Financial base

SR also requires a financial in addition to a human resource base. The former involves a range of things, including the development of a saving capacity, the willingness if not ethic to pay for services and sustain a community system for doing so, and the development of a community fund. All NGOs and CBOs examined were engaged in developing community funds, controlled by the assembly or a special committee. Accounts were kept by specially trained treasurers or young administrative staff (recruited from those in the community with literacy and numeracy), and supervised by the assembly, NGO staff and, where existing, the apex organisation. The community funds were surrounded by rules and regulations. Their purpose was manifold: function as a rotating fund for individual households--mostly at commercial rates of interest and showing a high rate of repayment of loans--and weakening the power of landlords and moneylenders; to help put up a local contribution in (co)financing schemes with banks or government programmes, for communal investments; to link community members to banks, using deposits as a sort of guarantee fund, whereby the community assumed the role as an intermediary (scrutinising and supervising borrowers etc); and (often as a partly separate fund) to help pay for the expenses of CBO and apex leadership. Community members were accumulating funds which ranged from Rs 12.000 to 90.000; in some occasions a network was being established of such community funds.

NGOs have learned their lesson. Community funds nowadays are more sustainable than some time ago. They are getting linked to formal financial institutions. And community members take great interest in the establishment and management of these funds. These are based on regular contributions which tend to increase over time, and occasionally on (one time) matching grants from NGOs meant to capitalise the funds. However limited, these community funds seem to act as a source of cohesion rather than conflict, and to inspire feelings of pride, independence and the idea that households and the community are able to **do** something, effectively. It is worthy of note that in the process of transfer, these funds were soon managed by the members and CBO, while the NGO took a backseat as advisor and monitor. There was insufficient time, however, to find out whether and to what extent community funds were utilised for urgent consumptive and/or for productive purposes, for individual household and/or for communal investments, possibly even in some sequence? At first sight, all of these purposes were found, often simultaneously. Yet for a SR strategy it should be of considerable interest if NGOs together with CBOs were getting some systematic data on this score.

4.3.4 Apex-organisation

Most NGOs relied on an apex-organisation or federation of local communities as an important vehicle for SR. Such a second or even third level organisation strengthens the poor; widens their power of mobilisation and ability to exert pressure; enhances their status in the eye of powerholders; and offers opportunities to participate in local government and in the process of policy making and allocation of benefits. In practice, most NGOs visited were quite effective in

helping CBOs to build up such associations; the latter soon got a momentum of their own¹¹. In many cases, they could rapidly demonstrate their usefulness in negotiations and confrontations with public and private agents. In collective bargaining with landowners over wages and form of payment they also proved to be quite effective, as in massive protest movements against violation of women and bad treatment of bonded labourers, in favor of collective demands for access to programmes, and so on. There was also evidence of another function of these apex-organisations: monitoring and supporting first-level organisations. This latter function was most salient in associations or trade unions which were **not** the result of NGO interventions but had a history and basis of their own. In the case of small farmers associations and unions of construction workers, they served as second, third and even national level apex-organisations for NGO-initiated local chapters. They also gave technical and political support to these local chapters. Sometimes, however, the difference in quality of leadership at first and second level appeared to be so great that the latter ran the risk of dominating the former,--an indication of the complexity of their relationship. Financially, these higher-level associations could only function thanks to the regular (but unavoidably limited) contributions from first-level CBOs; whether these contributions constitute a sufficient financial base remains to be seen.

It is unfortunate, however, that so far, the potential role of NGO-sponsored associations in the socio-economic (as distinct from the political and internal-monitoring) field, has hardly come off the ground. For purposes of joint financial, marketing and productive ventures, they could be of eminent use¹². Ventures of some scale would not just benefit the producers involved, but might also help pay for the institutional costs of the apex-organisation. One question is, of course, whether and to what extent NGOs in rural areas already follow an economic development strategy in which such ventures form a logical if not indispensable component. Another question is whether NGOs and CBOs avail of the requisite expertise to handle such ventures; from what we have seen, most do not. Producer associations might offer a better basis, especially when assisted by specialised people from NGOs or other institutions. But we did not come across such associations in the field.

4.3.5 Linking CBOs to government agencies and programmes

Given the rather unique proliferation of government schemes in India targeted at the poor, it is not surprising that quite a few NGOs--at least half of the case studies--maximise an access strategy: empowering poor men and women with regard to their claim-making power, demanding the multiple benefits to which they are entitled in the fields of basic needs, facilities, social security, infrastructure and productive inputs. As a brief comparison between 'newer' and 'older' communities made abundantly clear, CBOs and NGOs accompanying them were quite effective in accessing these benefits. Through the mechanism of their annual planning, monitoring and evaluation, communities prioritized their demands and bargained with external agencies for accessing resources as a compliment to those mobilised internally. In a very real sense, NGOs and CBOs 'helped government to do its job' and prevented leakage and corruption of public programmes. From a SR point of view, at least in India, such a linkage of CBOs of the poor to government programmes, is of strategic importance: not just for the benefits it generates but also in view of the awareness of the poor of their rights, their movement into the mainstream flow of resources and decision-making, and their understanding of the politics and procedures thereof.

Moreover, once benefits and assets from government (and banks') programmes reached and were transferred to the communities, the latter had to build up the requisite human resource, financial and

¹¹ In a sense, such momentum allowed the NGOs to keep a certain distance when it came to matters of electoral politics. Developing plans and strategies to strengthen the electoral power of the poor at local and higher levels became primarily a concern of grassroots organisations, while the NGOs took a backseat.

¹² In the urban setting things seem to be different. Associations of artisans from traditional handicraft as well as informal producers are assisted by NGOs specialised in design and marketing. We found little along these lines in the rural setting

organisational base to operate and maintain such assets. Think of training people; the development of rules and organisational to finance costs (users fees, service charges on government-derived schemes, special actions); and agreed ways to guarantee actual operations and maintenance (contributions in terms of labour inputs, materials, payments). In practice we found a process whereby men and women were building up such an internal base for the management of communal assets. To the extent that SR refers (also) to a community's capacity to manage and administer its own affairs and assets, clearly these CBOs were on the way.

The question can be raised, however, whether a sufficient base for SR was being laid by those NGOs and CBOs which basically focussed (only) on the effort to maximise extracting from government and banks whatever they were entitled to. It was clear that this 'empowerment' or 'access' strategy, as distinct from an 'integral' development strategy, was less engaged in the attempt to promote people's own initiative and creativity in utilising and developing their own resources and from that basis approach external institutions for support, or, alternatively, develop alone or together with NGOs, a set of 'parallel' institutions.

4.3.6 Transfer of schemes, assets and roles

In practice NGOs usually and progressively transfer schemes, assets and roles to CBOs and to their specialised fora or committees in a gradual way. It was found that in most cases this is a continuous process, loosely structured and sequenced in accordance with the way in which CBOs prioritised their schemes, and the preparation of the human and financial basis for their transfer. Also in government programmes (housing, health, irrigation wells etc) NGOs performed an intermediary role, at least during the first stage, helping CBOs to absorb these programmes, and to operate and sustain them later on their own.

Distinction should be made, however, between NGOs which clearly demarcated 'stages' in this process of transfer and those which did not, or not so sharply¹³. In practice, even from the very start, certain schemes, assets and roles were being transferred by NGOs to CBOs or specialised groups, a process which continued throughout subsequent years. For example, a simple health programme, a community fund or a drinking well was turned over and already made the responsibility of a CBO in a first stage, accompanied by the NGO which monitored and advised those implementing these schemes. More complex schemes like freeing bonded labourers and getting them established; leasing-in land for landless, or utilising waste-land and rendering it productive with the help of irrigation schemes; resettling dispersed families on a site granted by government and getting them houses; these and other, more complex schemes were often initiated and carried out in a second or later stage. A last stage included building up an apex-organisation, the consolidation of the human resource base of the schemes already transferred, linking up the communities with higher levels (for example, district) and rounding off the process of delegating responsibilities and assets to first and second-level grassroots organisations. Logically, the role performed by the NGO shifts during this process of transfers and level of SR.

The fieldstudy suggests that the psychological impact of agreeing with communities that at a particular moment in time they reach the last stage, and have now become 'autonomous', is considerable, indeed, notably more so than the effect produced by a continuous, gradual and sequential (but in principle 'stage-less') process of transferring schemes and corresponding assets and roles. Despite proceeding in accordance with an NGO rather than CBO agenda, being declared 'autonomous' nonetheless became a matter of pride and achievement at the grassroots level. It marked a shift in the community's attitude and relationship with the NGO, other communities which had not yet reached that status and with external agencies.

¹³ Some NGOs defined indicators to demarcate 'stages'; for examples, see the report on the file study.

4.3.7 *Transfer to whom?*

One aspect of the transfer process deserves special attention: are schemes, assets and roles being transferred to the CBO as a whole or to specialised groups, fora or committees? In practice we found both modalities. From a SR perspective it would seem, however, that the second modality presents certain advantages. These specialised committees received a certain level of technical and specialised training; they were introduced to relevant outside agents in their field (for example, general practitioners in the case of a health committee); in some cases they got linked to other specialised committees from other villages for purposes of joint training/upgrading and purchase of inputs; and they developed a particular competence and efficiency in their area of expertise. To socialise **various** types of **specialised** knowledge and skills, as related to various areas, among **all** members of a community, seems less efficient from a SR perspective. However, experience seems to show, as noted, that an exception has to be made in the case of a community fund: here, a basic general knowledge of objectives, rules and accounting helps a community to maintain a supervisory and monitoring role over the work of special committee,--something which is often seen as quite desirable.

A more problematic question arises in the case of cadre (animators, guides, coordinators or others). Such cadre was normally recruited from the communities but received special training, and was considered by the NGO and CBO alike, as local people taking over from the NGO once the latter ends its direct intervention cycle. This cadre represented an important investment in human capital for the community. Yet it was also clear that--apart from the elected leadership--it could and did obtain a position of notable power in the community, based on its experience, its connections and the information it possessed. It should be of interest to analyse and discuss the role of this cadre for the community, from a self-reliance point of view.

4.3.8 *Sustainability: the question of operations and maintenance*

The fieldstudy provided some evidence on the question what (if anything) the communities were doing--alone or with NGOs--in order to render the schemes, assets and roles transferred to them, sustainable? Were any provisions made to guarantee operations and maintenance (O&M)? As noted, in most communities where we checked this issue, CBOs and their specialised committees were searching for, or already applying, various kinds of arrangements to guarantee O&M: for financial aspects, they relied on methods like users' fees, regular contributions, a service charge imposed on resources obtained (thanks to the CBO's intervention) from banks or government agencies, and/or on special events which served to collect financial contributions. For the O&M of infrastructures, buildings, tanks and irrigation canals CBOs mobilised labour inputs on a regular basis, with fines in case these were not provided. In general, CBOs appeared to take care, not because NGOs were stimulating them, but on their own account.

4.3.9 *The nature of what is being transferred*

Finally, it seems that the nature of the object to be transferred also plays a role. Various points came out in this connection. For one thing, certain technologies inherent in some government programmes--for example, as related to milch animals and irrigation--were less fit for absorption by poor families and communities. The technologies were too demanding in terms of inputs, care and/or cost. Here the role of NGOs was important: together with CBOs, it was able to convince government agencies on technical, financial and social grounds, that alternative technologies would be more sustainable, and so promote the communities' self-reliance. For another, it became clear that transferring objects under conditions of sustainability was obviously easier when complete or near-complete cost recovery was possible, as in economic programmes; where opportunities for cost recovery were much less available, as in many basic service programmes, problems arose: here CBOs and NGOs had to look for subsidies from public and/or private sources.

Having reviewed, so far, the pragmatic 'logic' of a SR strategy as *practiced* by NGOs and CBOs, let us now briefly look more closely at some qualitative aspects of a SR strategy: at the questions whether SR was planned from the very start or introduced later, and whether SR was made an important part of an agreement and a joint PMES of NGO and CBO?

4.3.10 *Back to an SR intervention strategy: some 'strategic' questions*

4.3.10.1 *Growth towards SR: planned from the start or introduced later on?*

A crucial element of a SR strategy is whether SR is announced and stated explicitly by the NGO as an objective **from the very start**, or is **introduced later on**, during the process of implementation? The evidence of the case studies suggests that this distinction plays a crucial role throughout the whole SR intervention cycle. Indeed, it may well be the single most important element of a SR strategy because it sets the stage for everything else. In general, the former option emerges as much preferable. It consists of an initial and explicit statement concerning the NGO's concept while collaborating with grassroots organisations: to gradually and systematically work towards the self-reliance of the latter, including the transfer of schemes, assets and roles. This option introduced a powerful set of elements into the relationship between the two parties: a timeframe, that is, a frank limitation in time of the NGO's **direct** support and the eventual modification of the roles and relations between NGO and CBO; reciprocity and mutual accountability, as the lead role and responsibilities of the one gradually decline and those of the other increase; and the internalisation of SR as a value by both parties--including very much the grassroots themselves--which guides expectations and behaviour. Introducing SR at a later stage made it quite difficult to overcome dependency-relationships between the NGO and CBO, and to substitute this relationship by one based on a search for SR¹⁴. This important conclusion, too, warrants further discussion on the basis of more evidence, as it refers to a rather seminal point.

4.3.10.2 *Programming, monitoring and evaluating growth towards SR?*

Neither the survey data nor the fieldstudy generated evidence pointing to a clear and transparent connection between a joint NGO/CBO process of planning, monitoring and evaluation, on the one hand, and a process of growth towards SR, on the other. As noted, NGOs have not yet thought through the concept and strategies of SR; as much is evident from the survey data and recurrent inconsistencies between SR as an objective and the lack of related and coherent intervention strategies and programmes. It is not surprising therefore that, so far, neither the NGOs nor the grassroots organisations they work with, are utilising the PMES as a concrete vehicle to jointly programme the process of growth towards SR, that is, as an agreed working hypothesis with a certain timeframe, which is planned, monitored and evaluated by both parties on a regular basis. In practice, however, some NGOs and CBOs (especially those consisting of women) do use some elements of a PMES (such as agreed indicators and monitoring forms) to jointly review progress in the development of a grassroots organisation. But this is still far from doing so on a more systematic basis, with due allowance for the flexibility needed.

¹⁴ We found, interestingly enough, that in the case of an NGO's grassroots organisations where such dependency relations persisted--after working together for 12 to 15 years, and despite the NGO's announcement that the communities in future would have to stand on their own feet--a noticeable reversal took place only under rather exceptional conditions. For example, when communities which had experienced a clear rupture in their normal 'history', as they were forced, or chose, to relocate in a new area, had to start from zero and started to build up a new life. In another case an NGO was afraid that stressing SR might lead the grassroots to feel abandoned.

4.3.11 *Concluding observations*

What comes out of this section on SR intervention strategies is that, basically, NGOs and CBOs in their work already do dispose of a range of strategies and instruments which help promote SR on the part of the CBOs. They hardly start from scratch. But these strategies and instruments have not yet been structured and systematised from the perspective of SR promotion. Brought together here in some order as so many components of a pragmatic (rather than strategised) 'logic' of the NGOs, clearly they provide much valuable raw material for reflection and subsequent efforts at formulating a more consistent framework of SR concepts and corresponding intervention strategies in the field of integrated rural development.

The evidence shows that it is possible to build SR into the NGOs' intervention strategies in such a way that the grassroots men and women, their leaders and apex-organisations, internalise SR as a self-propelling value. The full potential force of such a grassroots motivation is not yet known: when becoming more widespread, its impact and the related learning effect of NGOs and CBOs alike may well help to render the efforts of both parties notably more effective **and** efficient.

4.4 **Lessons learned: factors which influence the success or failure of efforts to promote SR**

Being directly and deeply involved themselves, community members were not systematically asked for their views with regard to the factors which influenced the growth-process towards SR. One of the ideas which emerged recurrently during the group interviews, however, was that it takes women less time to become self-reliant than men, without clarity as to why this would be so. Other ideas along the same line hardly emerged. Instead, it were the staffmembers of NGOs, especially those with comparative experience and a helicopter view, who identified factors playing a role, including those at grassroots level. The analysis below is largely based on such NGO-derived understanding.

4.4.1 *The importance of the macro context*

It proved to be difficult to find out whether and to what extent North--South differences (especially though not only in the governmental sphere) as suggested by ICCO staff and independent consultants, did play a role amongst the poor in their growth towards SR. It is a fact that in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India, decentralisation reforms including panchyat elections have hardly been implemented: opportunities to utilise that channel are severely restricted as compared to, say, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In northern Orissa--also a poor state--things are somewhat better in the political-institutional field. Nevertheless, for example in Bihar, though the total number of government programmes may have been more limited than in southern states, NGOs and 'their' CBOs were quite effective, both when applying an 'empowerment' or access strategy, bringing benefits from public programmes to poor communities, and/or an 'inclusive' developmental strategy, based (also) on people's own initiative and self-created schemes. On the other hand, in a state like Orissa tribal communities still control, sometimes, considerable collective resources like forests, something which in the case of tribals in southern states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu can no longer be taken for granted; such resources obviously form a basis for security as well as a (potential) asset in a self-based development strategy. Hence, the North--South though relevant in some instances may be less important in others.

Another important contextual condition has to do with the extent to which at sub-state, state or even higher levels, popular movements existed such as unions and producer associations which can and did serve as a frame of reference into which NGO-sponsored local and apex-organisations were 'fitted' or fitted themselves. In Guntur district (AP), for example, many rural workers were organised in such unions with a combative tradition in their struggle for better wages; construction workers and small farmers, likewise, had unions or associations with an absorptive capacity and resources to support and help sustain local chapters.

Finally, and at a completely different level: NGOs during the seminar at Bangalore, linked to this study, stressed **not** the positive but the adverse impact of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation policies for the prospects of poor groups to become more self-reliant. In their view, due to the elimination of price subsidies, the cost of production and living had gone up, while prices for output had gone down. Besides, tribes and others lost their collective claims to land and forests, as the markets of such resources were freed. And private including multinational companies were granted the opportunity to encroach upon areas erstwhile protected by traditional entitlements.

4.4.2 Differences between kinds of grassroots

Another factor affecting growth towards SR is the kind of grassroots involved. Often, women, urban workers and small farmers were singled out by NGOs and ICCO staff as becoming more readily self-reliant than others. Sometimes it is their access to resources which is referred to as the cause (especially small farmers), other times already existing organisations (both small farmers and urban workers) or psychological motivation (women). Systematic data to support, amend or even revert such hypotheses is not yet available but would be worthwhile connecting. If only because these might help develop **differential** intervention cycles and related SR strategies.

The SR potential and proclivities of tribals--especially as compared with scheduled castes and classes--forms a controversial subject. There are NGOs which staunchly defend the thesis that tribes--especially when able to retain their own cultural identity, language, traditions and values as well as collective control over resources--clearly do have comparative advantages. Indeed, as we found, even where such cultural and physical assets were no longer available, and tribal families were highly dispersed, NGOs still had a base--tribals being outside the caste system--to rally them around a joint collective project, to settle them on a separate plot of land and help them develop as a dynamic coherent community. On the other hand, there were those who argued that harijans and poor classes are already part of the market economy, and that once are given better opportunities such as access to credit, leased-in land etc, develop more rapidly than girijans. Here, again, systematic information including 'hard data' would be very useful, for reasons set out in the previous paragraph.

Research on the gender differential is also needed, if only because few if any people--including grassroots women themselves--can readily explain why women would be more interested in, and prepared for, SR than men. Women, once organised, often seemed more assertive than men, less 'vulnerable' and at the same time less 'political'; that is, less evidently engaged in a public competition for power, but more focussed on concrete and tangible benefits for their families and themselves. Women act with a great sense of responsibility not just for themselves but also for others. NGOs specialised in working with women tended to stress the crucial importance of self-definition of what one is and would like to become, at the individual and group level. Such inner or internal strength manifested itself quite noticeably when women got to organise themselves in their own organisation. It is sometimes difficult, however, to directly compare men and women in a rural environment as both tend to be involved in different sectors and schemes, for example, women more in social services and men more in production; nonetheless, when in urban and rural areas credit schemes were introduced to generate income and employment from non-agricultural sources, often women responded much more dynamically than men. All of this is obviously quite relevant for SR strategies, and their differential application.

A last observation in this connection refers to some evidence we found of women entering into politics as candidates. Some successful women who had proved themselves at community level--not just in economic schemes but also as leaders of women organisations and/or members of community leadership--managed to obtain support not just from a female but also male constituency. Though still few in number, such examples suggest that the male response to the initiative and drive of women leaders is not necessarily only one of rejection and reassertion of male

dominance¹⁵. Obviously, these examples of women occupying positions at the 'macro' level are of great importance for women's SR in terms of enabling access to power and resources.

4.4.3 *Self reliance of the poor as linked to 'self-reliance' of NGOs*

In seminar I at Bangalore but especially seminar II at New Delhi, both linked to the present study, the point was raised by NGO participants that the disposition and readiness with which NGOs will approach the issue of grassroots SR, is partly determined by the question whether the NGO itself feels secure with regard to its own continuity. Is the whole issue of SR not part of a hidden agenda, i.e. of a plot of donor agencies to reduce their funding and withdraw from (certain) NGOs? To NGOs, their linkages with the poor at grassroots level in a sense represent the main justification for their existence and external support; the loss of such linkages, would that not jeopardise the NGOs' future?

This belief appeared to be partly related to the unfortunate term 'withdrawal' of NGOs from CBOs, once the cycle of direct support has come to an end; as most stipulated, it is not withdrawal that is at stake but a modification or transformation of the relationship between these two NGOs and CBOs. Instead, it was argued, NGOs do continue at two levels: (i) with continued but often indirect support for the now 'autonomous' communities, preferably via their federations or apex-organisation so as to maximise multiplying effects, and/or via supporting institutions like training centres, and (ii) with a repetition of the intervention cycle of direct support among a new batch of first level communities,--the latter possibly abbreviated without loss of effectiveness due to the NGO's own learning process during the previous cycle. Though such a sustainable scenario was recognised as viable and already being executed by some NGOs, quite a few were not yet familiar with it. The agency ICCO, on its part, stressed emphatically, that for them the two issues were **not** connected with one another, and that this may need to be clarified and once more emphasised in future dialogue.

4.5 **Agreements on SR between NGOs and targetgroups, and the use of PMES?**

From what we have seen during the fieldstudy a simple and straightforward conclusion would be warranted concerning this research question. NGOs and CBOs rely neither on (more or less) transparent and explicit agreements nor on PMES as specific parts and instruments of a SR-promotion policy or strategy. As noted above (3.10.2), this is not (yet) part of the NGO culture in India. Unfortunately. Both vehicles would help put the relationship between NGO and grassroots on a more equal and transparent footing; on the basis of a more or less formalised charter of mutual rights and obligations, in the context of a dynamic process of foreseen transfers and timeframe, and to which both parties could be held accountable; and lay the basis for a more rapid development process with a more effective and efficient use of the resources of **all** agents involved.

4.6 **The potential of present (decentralisation) reforms in India for purposes of SR**

The conclusion in relation to the last research question is more complicated. For one thing, utilising the implications of such reforms (especially the constitutional amendments 73 & 74) at local level depends very much on the way and extent to which such reforms are being effectively implemented in any one state. And this varies much from one state to another; is more advanced in Kerala and West Bengal than, say, in Bihar. For another, many NGOs doubt whether these reforms will, in general, bring about any real flow of power and resources towards the local level; much remains at the level of the district and many expect only a limited trickle-down reaching the gram panchayat. Moreover, as experience elsewhere seems to show, landlords, MLAs, local officials and others are

¹⁵ Of course, we do not know how often similar attempts of women are or have been rejected by the men.

often well-situated to capitalise whatever comes floating down for their own benefit. Hence, seems to be the predominant view, expectations should not be exaggerated.

4.7 Concluding observations

4.7.1 *The need for future work on grassroots SR*

It may be concluded, first of all, that the case studies had a considerable 'value-added', being the only means available to effectively reach the grassroots level. Of course, the short visits of some 2-3 hours to communities and interviews with leaders from apex-organisations still provided only a limited source of data. Hence what we learnt so far from the fieldstudy about the poor at grassroots level--whose growth to SR, after all, occupies center stage in this study--can only be considered as a beginning and being in need of a follow-up. Indeed, adequate and sufficient data may only be assembled during more extended periods of living together with 'older' and 'newer' communities, and involving community members actively in the process of research. In such a subsequent study, a good variety of communities is needed, including those (with the same caste, gender and class characteristics) where NGOs introduced SR from the very start and those where it was put on the agenda later on; communities under conditions of an access or 'empowerment' strategy and those working under an 'integral' strategy. These and other sources of variation which during the fieldstudy emerged as relevant sources of differentiation, may help select cases for a follow-up study.

In studying the process of 'growth towards SR' and the systematic promotion thereof, NGOs and ICCO play a central role. The former through their actual involvement in the field, the latter through their process of reviewing, monitoring and evaluating policies and practices. The NGOs--like the CBOs--often lack the time as well as an NGO platform to reflect on, and systematise their experiences. ICCO sharing the NGOs' universe of discourse is in a position to have an overview of NGOs' SR-concepts and practices, which the NGOs themselves do not enjoy. Local 'research-' (and sometimes training-) NGOs, too, have ICCO's advantages. The three together--donating agency, interventionists and research NGOs--have already taken certain steps to come together. Indeed, they can and should play complimentary roles in carrying on with work on awareness-raising and the systematic promotion of SR. Given the strategic importance of SR for all concerned, there is a vacuum here that needs to be filled by focussed action.

Secondly, a notable part of the evidence presented here dealt with the grassroots **in their relationship** with the NGOs supporting them, rarely with the grassroots in and by themselves. This 'relational' approach may be a consequence of the way the guiding research questions were formulated, at this exploratory stage. Yet in a follow-up study grassroots communities should also be analysed in their own terms, their own structure and processes, and the ways in which these have been impacted (or not) by the NGO intervention. A study of 'autonomous' communities where the NGO no longer intervenes directly, would be of particular interest, because it would help show whether and to what extent the increased self confidence, communal organisation, practice of PMES and assertive relationship with the outside world continue. And if so, at what level: pursuing a strategy of 'survival' for households and community or (also) entering clearly a path of 'growth'?

A related observation relates to a basic, underlying, problem which has not yet been touched upon, yet which is quite important for the understanding and promotion of SR. To formulate this problem well, we need to restate some of the points which emerged from the analysis so far. Clearly, SR though in this case sought at grassroots level, belongs to the universe of discourse of 'external' interventionists like government officials, donor agencies and NGOs. Members and leaders of poor communities tend to adopt such concepts from those intending to support them, as we saw, often in the version they absorb during training and discussions especially with NGOs. Insofar as the present (limited) data suggest, the poor rarely demand that the NGO leaves the initiative to them and take a back-seat. In practice, it were usually the NGOs which during the intervention cycle predominated in defining the terms and moment of 'autonomy' of the CBOs. That is, the definition

and achievement of SR often formed part of what was and remained an asymmetrical relationship. And we have seen how difficult it is in a society, so long and strongly marked by institutionalised inequality, to avoid paternalism and to reverse if not prevent concomitant feelings of dependency on the part of poor communities at the bottom of that society. Only in those (still rare) cases where 'growth towards SR' was explicitly based from the very start on agreements and laid down in a joint PMES, those terms and moments were agreed by both parties, and SR became a self-held objective in poor rural communities. Below, in the section on 'implications for policy', we will very much recommend that the last approach be adopted by NGOs wherever possible. Unless SR becomes internalised and appropriated by a CBO as its own guiding principle, the asymmetry and unequal power to define the terms for the relationship between CBO and NGO--and its evolution over time--may well continue far more than is desirable.

4.7.2 The role of NGOs: accelerate the shift from direct intervention towards enablement?

When all is said and done, however, we still know not enough about what might happen with regard to SR, even under the optimal condition of a well SR programme, with its timeframe, and which is initiated and agreed upon from the very start. To understand this we have to jump to another country. In Peru, NGOs under the threat of terrorists, had to significantly diminish their direct intervention in peasant communities with which they were working. The transfer of schemes, assets and roles (communal funds, community pharmacy etc) to CBOs and special committees had to be executed well ahead of the moment that had been defined originally, often together with those communities. The NGOs were surprised and, dismayed if not impressed by the speed and quality with which the local population took over, and managed these schemes and resources. The NGOs realised that they had seriously underestimated the communities and their capacities. Since then, these NGOs are involved in redefining and reprogramming their role and method of work over time. In a nutshell, this comes down to scheduling transfers much earlier than before, shifting sooner from intervention towards enablement, but continue to accompany and support those who are now made fully responsible. This example brings out the problem stated earlier. Despite the work done during this study, we still do not understand the dynamics of self-reliance well enough. We do not know, yet, whether it would be possible under the optimal conditions to which we referred earlier, to accelerate the transfer of schemes, assets and responsibilities, combined with a modification of the roles of NGOs and CBOs: the NGOs would **not** 'withdraw' from the communities, **nor** radically 'transform' or modify their role as happens once the intervention cycle has been completed. **But** already adopt a methodology of **in-service training**, enablement and facilitation, still at an early stage **during** the 'basic' intervention cycle. Such a method may well be more effective as people learn better from their own errors and the corrections thereof, and more efficient, as people proceed more rapidly towards full ownership and administration of schemes, assets and roles.

These reflections help underscore the limitations of this Programme Evaluation. When it comes to the problem of timing transfers as just stated, however, all stakeholders, from the rural poor in India to the Ministry in The Hague, have a 'stake' in getting it clarified in future. Or at least in getting a process started which may gradually help clarify this problem. It is **not** an issue of principles or objectives, but of **methodology** of intervention: a shift from direct intervention to enablement. It would seem at this point that only agreed 'experimentation', not theoretical speculation, can help everybody forward, with the understanding and support of all agents involved. The learning process of NGOs and CBOs, which is already underway, takes a long time, indeed, it seems to demand the execution of a whole and often lengthy intervention cycle. What is 'at stake' here, is a more rapid learning process, in smaller steps, closely related to an accelerated process of progressive transfers of schemes, assets and roles. NGOs, together with communities and apex-organisations, might experiment with different methods and lengths of periods for the establishment, transfer and 'institutionalisation' of schemes, for example, by using different methodologies in different communities. Whatever is decided, such search for better methods should be made part of the agenda of the agents interested in promoting SR.

If such studies in future on the dynamics of SR are highly desirable, within the notable and obvious limitations of the present study, it can still be asked by way of concluding observations--and without repeating what has already been presented earlier--what we have learnt in general so far?

4.7.3 *SR a crucial and viable strategy: the need for a longer term view*

In order to grasp the dynamics of SR at grassroots level, we need to put this process in a longer term perspective.

With the help of NGOs, rural poor communities overcome their lack of organisation, voice, information and connections. They begin to move forward by initiating their own schemes, and by claiming their rights and entitlements vis à vis government. In both cases but particularly the latter, CBOs--with the NGOs supporting them--are quite effective.

From this perspective, CBOs are progressively able to do their own decision-making and self-management, based on their own organisation, a participatory PMES and on communal facilities and assets. From an NGO perspective, they **are** becoming 'subjects' assuming, at one point, the status of 'autonomous' CBOs. The point is not only that thanks to learning from past experience this growth towards SR could be more systematised and accelerated. The question is also: **self reliance for what?**

The developmental process goes on. Often, the first stage of an NGO/CBO intervention cycle (say, 'stage I') was basically focussed on improving the conditions for 'survival', in the areas of basic needs (health, housing, education) and of income & productive employment. True, 'developmental' activities, meant to increase the productive potential of households and the community as a whole, had been started yet they still remained limited. Now, in stage II, autonomous communities and their associations, together with the NGOs supporting them, may have to think explicitly and more systematically in terms of 'growth' and related strategies. Growth preferably not limited to a single community but encompassing various localities, demanding initiatives in the fields of productive organisation, human resources and production as well as marketing.

As noted earlier, the roles and relationships between CBOs and NGOs presumably vary in accordance with such stages of development. As the number and spread of autonomous communities grow, the need for their linkage to 'mainstream' development and for their own lines of activities will also increase. Producer associations rather than (only) territorial CBOs may have to be promoted and assisted by NGOs; new supporting institutions may be needed for purposes of marketing, credit and training. Both CBOs and their federations, and NGOs will have to search for the roles they are best capable of playing in this increasingly complex and demanding scenario; probably new and more 'technical-professional' inputs are required from NGOs, demanding a (partial) reconversion on their part.

In 'the chain of solidarity' of CBOs, NGOs and agencies, SR is associated with apprehension if not fear: fear among CBOs that SR will mean 'withdrawal' of NGO support, and fear among NGOs that, likewise, SR may mean 'withdrawal' of the agencies's support. Such expectations should be seen against the background of this longer term development perspective. As noted, CBOs in stage I should be able to continue expecting NGOs' support, together with that of their own apex-organisations; presumably, here CBOs and NGOs will be able to reap the benefits of their learning process so that stage I in future can be implemented with greater outreach and effectiveness. At the same time, specialised NGOs or professional staff of NGOs will, together with producer associations and CBO federations, work on the implications of stage II. Autonomous CBOs and CBO federations will then consider, together with NGOs, whether new enterprises and supporting institutions will be run jointly, or by one of the parties; these and analogous questions imply that the substantial application of the term 'self reliance' will get new meanings in stage II.

Whatever may happen, it has now become more clear that transparency is required regarding CBOs' and NGOs' roles, relationship and responsibilities, **from the very start**. Working hypotheses are needed, with a corresponding timeframe, agreement and specified in a joint PMES: a frame of reference which can be adjusted over time in accordance with experience, changing circumstances and so on.

The agencies, too, will need to adapt their frame of reference and see whether, and to what extent, they prefer to stay at stage I, or are prepared to also accept the implications of stage II¹⁶. These implications may well include a growing demand for funds, including a notable proportion with the possibility to recover costs and extended as loans rather than grants. New types of finance may be needed, such as co-financing with (local) government, multi- and bilateral funding. Reflection and discussion on these future scenarios and options are needed, if only to maintain clarity in the relationship with partners.

¹⁶ There are indications that ICCO, like HIVOS and NOVIB in India, is already entering carefully into new types of ventures of a stage II type.

CHAPTER 5 MAIN RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

Main Results

5.1 Overall observation

1. SR has been recognised for some time as an important general objective by ICCO, NGOs and the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation. Yet it is only recently that SR begins to attract more attention and becomes a matter of operational concern especially to ICCO and its partners. At this stage, SR represents a lofty objective yet at the same time for most agents it is still an abstract concept, unclear in its general and operational features, and in need of clarification if it is to guide thinking and policy making.

5.2 The concept of Self Reliance

2. SR is associated by some agents with related concepts like 'sustainability', 'empowerment' and 'self determination'. 'Sustainability' is located in a project framework and seen as the capacity of grassroots groups to 'carry on by themselves' after project termination. This capacity in turn is seen as premised on requisite skills and organisation, and as closely linked with SR, with 'project-ownership' and the process of transferring project results and roles to the poor. 'Empowerment' is often brought in as a (pre)condition for SR which itself is defined in various ways: as a capacity to 'make autonomous decisions', 'bargain with outsiders especially government agencies', or to 'manage'. 'Self-determination', in turn, is defined as sharing with SR an emphasis on independent choice and action, but as a broader if not societal or macro phenomenon, in comparison with SR's emphasis on a more limited, often even micro-level, characteristic of groups or sectors of population. The precise delineation of these related concepts needs to be worked out in future discussions¹⁷.

3. **ICCO's staff** from the South Asia desk have and apply different concepts of SR, as evidenced by their reference to a heterogeneous set of elements and corresponding indicators of SR, which have not yet been systematised and worked into a more or less consistent whole. Whereas some emphasize sociopsychological characteristics like identity and assertiveness, also if not especially at the individual level, others stress the importance of 'internal' organisational aspects like good organisation, leadership and the capacity to plan, monitor and evaluate (PMES), and preferably linked with 'external' elements like connections with (local) government and bargaining capacity; again others underline the strategic importance of an economic base of a CBO, including skills, collective assets and entrepreneurial capacity.

4. In the survey, all **NGOs** report including SR as a general objective, yet most have begun to elaborate a somewhat more operational concept only during the last 6-7 years. Present definitions of SR vary notably. Like ICCO's staff, NGOs offer a rich and heterogeneous set of elements of SR; whereas only some concentrate on such generic definitions like 'decision-making capacity' or 'self-management', most provide a complex set of SR-elements including both internal-organisational and external-relational indicators of SR. Practically always SR is conceptualised by NGOs as a collective, not individual, characteristic and process. It should be added however that the linkage between general concepts and their operationalisation is often tenuous and not yet marked by coherence and consistency; this by itself seems to reflect the present state of affairs amongst many NGOs with

¹⁷ Especially the Ministry's staff tried to identify the meaning of SR by relating it to, and distinguishing it from, such closely concepts like those referred to here. The Ministry has not yet an institutional definition of SR, nor a policy or operational tools related to it.

regard to SR: they have not yet thought it through, let alone systematised the complexities, process and policies of SR.

5. Judging by the case studies, NGOs working with **women** tend to have a special definition of SR: as related to the capacity to define what one would like to be and become, and seek to work closer to that ideal. Yet here, too, group organisation is considered a precondition for affirmation at an individual level.

6. The **Grassroots or CBOs** did not provide 'institutional' definitions; in most cases it were individual men and women--often though not exclusively those in a position of leadership--who offered their views of SR during collective interviews. In contrast to staff from ICCO and the NGOs, grassroots people gave a definition of SR in generic terms; the most frequently used were 'manage your own affairs without outside help', 'making your own decisions', 'capacity to negotiate with government', 'unity' and 'having particular skills' (for saving, PMES, keep accounts etc). In our experience with 19 villages, from North to South, grassroots people were not unfamiliar with the concept of SR (which played an important role in the struggle for independence and immediately afterwards) and were quite capable of providing a definition.

7. It is important to note that 'older' villages where NGOs had been working for quite some time (up to 10-12 years) and 'newer' villages where NGOs were only active for a short time (from 3 months to one year), did not differ in the kind of SR definition which they offered; instead, it was noteworthy that where NGOs emphasized a generic concept of SR, the people at grassroots level tended to echo that concept. The former phenomenon may be due to the NGOs' own relatively recent concern with SR crosscutting older and newer villages, rather than to a lack of growing maturity of grassroots groups in their own thinking about it. The latter phenomenon seems to underline the 'leading role' which NGOs play in this area, as the agent taking the initiative.

8. **Women** tended to define SR more than men in terms of 'unity', 'equality of men and women' and sociopsychological characteristics like 'courage', and 'boldness' in dealing with officials. There tends to be, in other words, a gender specific view of what SR means which inspires both the NGOs and the women they work with.

9. Looking at these tendencies, one may infer that ICCO and its partner-NGOs should be able to discuss SR both in general and in operational terms: their discourse shows many similarities, and differs in degree of complexity from that of the grassroots which rely on a notably less elaborate view.

5.3 Concepts of 'growth towards SR'

10. Both **ICCO** and its partners, the **NGOs**, not just identified general and rather 'static' elements of SR, but also had a notion of a dynamic process of 'growth towards SR', proceeding in stages. In most cases, these agents think in terms of three stages. The total intervention cycle lasts some 10 years on average (according to the NGO-questionnaire), even though in the four case studies we found a variation from 5-12 years.

11. Considerable confusion may still exist with regard to the nature and precise demarcation of these stages in terms of years and objectives, but NGOs agree about the last stage: it should **not** be thought of in terms of 'withdrawal' but of 'transfer' and 'redefinition of the relationship between NGO and CBO'. Moreover, the need for a timeframe is acknowledged--no open agenda but a timeframe defined from the start as a working hypothesis in the context of a SR process. Nonetheless, given the problems of grassroots--especially those in very precarious conditions--to think in such a clear timeframe, it was observed that such a timeframe may have to be defined and agreed upon between NGO and CBO after an initial period, and be handled with flexibility afterwards.

12. The **grassroots** see SR as a process but not one broken down into stages. Though aware that the direct support from NGOs will come to an end, at one moment in time, or at least will diminish, one rarely finds the position that it is the CBO which (should) decide(s) when that moment has arrived. In most cases it is the NGO which takes the initiative. In practice, this has meant that SR has often been introduced as a goal **not** from the very **start** but **during** the implementation of the intervention cycle. In these (so far still prevailing) conditions, the grassroots were found to remain notably dependent on the NGO and not to embrace SR as a goal of the CBO and its members themselves. It was only sometimes that the SR process was pegged to an agreed timeframe and corresponding indicators which were jointly monitored by grassroots and NGO staff. Yet in those cases where 'independent' or 'autonomous' villages exist--mostly as a result of a SR-scenario which was announced and agreed upon from the very start of the cycle--such a status was clearly associated with a CBO-driven and CBO-held view of SR, as well as with pride and a feeling of achievement.

13. From this perspective, one might conclude that there is a dynamic process going on in the field of SR, both among NGOs and the grassroots they work with. But this process still is little 'structured' or carried out in accordance with some agreed timetable and programme on both sides, especially the grassroots level. At this stage it is important to observe that this state of affairs points to a lack of clear conceptualisation of SR as a dynamic process, with its own goals, stages and gradual redefinition of the relationship between NGOs and grassroots.

5.4 SR policies and intervention strategies

14. **ICCO** does not yet have a concrete policy nor operational instruments, to promote, monitor and evaluate the promotion of SR among grassroots, by its partners. Let alone concrete agreements. So far, it is largely through fieldvisits, dialogues and correspondence that ICCO staff keeps SR on the agenda.

15. Insofar as the **NGOs** are concerned, *in practice*--as revealed by the case studies--they seem to apply an intervention strategy which has an important 'logic' of its own, from a SR point of view. Such a 'logic' can be put together and discerned in the following sequence of steps: awareness raising and organisation; training of leaders, cadres and basis; promotion of PME capacity; development of a financial base mostly a community fund managed by the CBO or a special committee; empowerment on the basis of discussion of identity, strengthening self-confidence; provision of information on rights and entitlements to and accessing government programmes; the development of a federation of groups or villages or an apex-organisation; and entering into a process of linkages and bargaining with government agencies, banks and other external agents. When looking at how the NGOs defined their intervention strategies *in the questionnaire*, however, such a 'logic' does not emerge¹⁸: hence, we conclude, this 'logic' is not yet properly theorised or strategised, and proceeds on what seems to be a rather pragmatic basis.

16. It can be added that *in practice*, the differentiation among NGOs in the field of SR strategies has three sources: (i) the kind of development strategy applied, (ii) the timing of SR in the course of the intervention cycle, and (iii) the manner in which they approach the transfer of schemes, assets and roles to the CBO. Comments on some of these points have already been made earlier, but here an attempt will be made to formulate these sources of differentiation in a more systematic manner.

¹⁸ 'Creating an apex organisation', for example, does not appear at all, while 'bargaining with government' occupies only the 15th place, when all (elements of) strategy are rank-ordered, despite the fact that both steps are obviously of strategic importance in the promotion of SR. Such data suggest as noted a discrepancy between concept and practice, whereby the latter (fortunately) comes out better than the former.

17. A first source of differentiation in the SR strategy is related to the NGO's kind of development strategy: does it primarily (and maybe only) consist of an **empowerment** strategy, or of a more **integral** strategy: the latter does not exist only of empowering the organised poor--especially in their relationship with the government and state, and helping them to claim and obtain their entitlements--but it also attempts to help the poor to become aware of and develop their own resources (e.g. water, forest, land, special skills) through organised action or projects. SR in the case of an 'empowerment' strategy is largely limited to maximising the flow of resources from the state, banks and maybe other agents (traders, landlords) towards the organised poor, thanks to effective 'political' means. SR in an integral strategy means **also** a capacity to independently take development initiatives, maybe not foreseen in government programmes, and to also handle the human, financial and organisational implications of such initiatives. This has obvious consequences both for the NGO and CBO involved: demands more technical training, better PME skills etc.

18. Another issue in this connection has to do with the implications of working with government programmes: do NGOs and CBOs simply accept the conditions of such programmes, or are they willing and capable of negotiating a change in those conditions? For example, in the case of a milch animal programme select a less demanding but more sustainable breed, or in an irrigation programme opt for a more manageable technology? From a SR point of view, such questions are important, if only because they influence the speed and extent to which grassroots organisations will be able to absorb such programmes and learn to manage them by themselves. We found evidence that provided NGOs and CBOs can argue their case for programme adjustment on solid grounds (technically and financially speaking), government agencies are prepared to adjust their programmes.

19. A second source of differentiation among NGOs is related to the **timing of SR** as an agreed goal: from the very start or later on, once the intervention is well underway. As noted previously, the case studies suggest that the grassroots internalised and appropriated SR as their own objective much earlier and better, under the former strategy than under the latter. Announcing SR as a goal half-way or even later, faces serious difficulties in reverting the existing dependency of the grassroots on the NGO and getting SR accepted as a value of the latter themselves. A rather notable level of dependency was found even among grassroots with which an NGO had already been working for more than a decade¹⁹.

20. The **transfer** of programmes or schemes and the corresponding assets and responsibilities or roles, obviously forms a core element in a SR intervention strategy. Yet according to the survey, it had not yet been conceptually identified as such by the NGOs. The case studies suggest, however, that here we find a third source of differentiation among NGOs: in practice NGOs follow different transfer strategies. Some NGOs apply a **gradual** and **sequential process** of transfer, item by item as it were, in accordance with the degree to which the terrain has been prepared: an adequate human and resource base has been put in place, provisions have been made for a proper operation, administration and maintenance, etc. In this way, NGOs transferred successively, for example, a forest, a tank for irrigation, a school and so on to the CBO. Other NGOs applied a transfer process with explicit '**stages**', with clearly demarcated stages (in an overall manner), especially the last stage when villages or CBOs become 'autonomous' and take over from the NGO. In practice, the two strategies can and are being combined, especially when the second one concretely consists of a gradual, sequential transfer of schemes, assets and roles anyway--a process which may begin from the early stage of intervention onwards and continues throughout; nevertheless, at a particular moment in time, a new stage is publicly and formally demarcated, involving a shift in the relationship between NGO and grassroots organisation. The psychological impact of 'stage-ing' the transfer and mode of relationships we noted is considerable: as observed

¹⁹ Exceptions to this rule were also found, but only in the case of 'special' groups, both of which had resettled and were forced to open up new land and develop the resources they found there. Both were proud of their achievements, shifted their relationship with the NGO and only called them to help them tackle especially complicated problems.

in the case studies, being 'autonomous' becomes a source of pride and basis for a really more independent way of relating to the NGO and the outside world.

21. A relevant point in matters of transfer relates to **sustainability**. Evidence from the case studies suggests that NGOs and CBOs together are, indeed, involved in the search for and application of Operations and Maintenance schemes (for maintenance of schools and roads, cleaning of irrigation canals and wells, etc). For example, a reliance on users' fees, service charges on resources obtained by the CBO from government, the organisation of special events in order to collect financial contributions for a particular demanding O&M activity, the programmed labour support of community members, and so on. Such contributions also extend to the payment of the expenses of CBO leaders and apex/federation officials.

22. An important and closely related question is: **who are the recipients of the transfer?** Here distinction must be made between NGOs which transfer schemes, assets and roles to the CBO as a whole, and NGOs which rely on specialised committees. It would seem from what we saw in practice that the latter has notable advantages, as it facilitates a process of focussed training in (sometimes) technical areas, the working out of O&M (operations and maintenance) provisions which help guarantee sustainability, as well as networking between the specialised committees; the latter, in turn, makes it easier to develop joint schemes for purchasing inputs and/or marketing output. The drawback is that the CBO as a whole may lose a certain degree of control, but NGOs and CBOs together are trying to develop counter-measures; for example, provide all community members with basic knowledge of accounting so as to enable them to control the operations of a special community fund committee.

23. Finally, the question should be raised whether and to what extent NGOs utilise their **Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System** (PMES) for the purpose of programming and implementing a SR intervention strategy? The answer should be, judging from both survey and case study data, that to the extent that NGOs have such a PMES in place, so far they only rarely utilise it in a participatory manner for purposes of promoting and implementing SR. This is not so surprising inasmuch as most NGOs and CBOs do not act, so far, on the basis of agreed goals, programmes and a timeframe of SR. Hence, it becomes difficult to programme the transfer of schemes, assets and roles in a more systematic and transparent manner, together with the requisite human and financial resources, and with mutual accountability between NGO and CBO.

24. To judge on the basis the case studies, ICCO's partners are quite effective in the areas where NGOs are often ascribed special comparative advantages: in the organisation of poor communities of tribals, outcastes, scheduled classes, women and other sectors like urban workers. Especially when comparing 'newer' with 'older' communities, notable differences appear in level of organisation, self-confidence, the articulation of problems and ways to tackle them, relationships with other communities, connections with government officials and banks, and so on. Such an organisational if not empowerment base lays a good if not indispensable fundament for a further process of SR.

25. Nevertheless, from a SR perspective questions can be raised about **SR at grassroots level** in the light of NGO intervention strategies. Already earlier we had the opportunity to note that SR still remains a primarily NGO driven objective, which so far only in a limited number of cases was appropriated by grassroots organisations, and converted into a self-propelling process at that level. In most instances, people still perceived a need for NGO's continued support for a number of years. Typically enough, where the NGO was following an empowerment strategy, people emphasized SR as meaning that you have a solid internal organisation and are able to bargain with government; in this case, when older, even 'autonomous' villages were asked whether NGOs were still needed and if so, what for? the answer tended to be: yes, we still need NGO support in our struggle with officials, landlords and police. Where the NGO was involved with the grassroots in a more inclusive development strategy, there was less emphasis on the external connections of communities, but more on internal organisation; in the case of more advanced communities, the answer to the same

question on the NGO's future role, whether needed, was: yes, we need the NGO to provide us with training and obtaining financial resources.

26. A set of other questions relate to elements of the NGOs' 'logic' as systematised above. In the area of **organisation**, NGOs and CBOs appear to be still wrestling with the way overall and gender-based organisations should be linked to or even integrated with one another; with how to manage inter-caste and class relationships and resolve conflicts; and with the issue whether specialised committees represent a better vehicle for developing a good and specialised human resource base than the CBO as a whole. Of course, such questions are difficult and complex, yet for a 'sustainable SR' at grassroots level they are important and still in need of a coherent response. CBOs and NGOs might benefit from an exchange of experience in these difficult problem-areas. In the closely related question on **training**, one could ask whether the present considerable weight attached by NGOs to matters of organisation, collective rights and entitlements, will provide a sufficient basis for SR in future: CBOs may well demand--and some did already as we saw--more training in technical including economic fields, to develop their own cadre to manage their funds, services and economic projects.

27. In relation to the CBO's **financial base** there is a dynamic and effective process going on, including training and an early transfer of responsibilities; it includes rotating funds but goes beyond that, involving a savings capacity, a willingness to pay for services and an 'ethic' related to supporting a community's activities also financially. Sometimes community funds get linked into supra-local networks and occasionally reference is even made to a 'people's bank'. The amounts saved by households and communities--reaching 90.000 Rs and more--are considerable and still growing, sometimes matched by donations from the NGO. But again here, too, it is not clear for what purposes these funds will be used in future? At present, they often function as rotating funds to provide credit to individual households, often at non-subsidised rates of interest, and with high rates of repayment; they are utilised to finance both consumptive and productive expenditures.

28. Concerning the **apex organisations** of CBOs: we noted already that although at a conceptual (survey) level the NGOs hardly identified them as a strategic vehicle to promote SR, in practice NGOs do give them great importance (without explicit reference to SR). At present, the apex organisation seems to be used primarily as a pressure group vis à vis external public and private agents, and also as a supporting and sometimes supervisory institution for first-level CBOs. NGOs perform, indeed, a quite effective task in this area, and the networks of CBOs quickly attain a momentum of their own²⁰. These networks are also beginning to help coordinate joint actions during times of local elections, and to successfully launch independent candidates both for reserved and general seats at panchyat and higher levels. But the other side of the coin is that such apex organisations readily become an attractive target of political parties which attempt to coopt them; in this case SR would come to include preparing such apex-organisations for this risk.

29. Lastly, CBOs and NGOs are quite effective in their **dealings with external agents** especially government officials (BDOs, Controller) and institutions (including the Courts, police), local government (especially the Gram Panchyat), banks and private groups such as landlords and traders. After an initial period when the NGOs introduced and accompanied CBO leaders and cadre, the latter have begun to act on their own. The level is moving upwards, from village to panchyat, bloc, mandal, taluk, district and even beyond, helping to integrate the organised poor more into mainstream life and the flow of resources.

30. By way of a concluding comment on this section, one could argue, once more, that the NGOs' **practice** in the field of SR is notably richer and 'logical' than their **concept** or **theory**. Were such practice codified and systematised in a better way than could be done in this exploratory

²⁰ In the field, one occasionally observes a major difference in quality of leadership at the second as compared with the first level; this makes one wonder whether grouping the best together may cause problems in the comprehension, initiation, speed and control of processes of change, and whether efforts should be made to keep both levels more in tune?

study, then a basis would be laid for bringing concepts and practice more closely together, and so help identify viable policies, strategies and instruments of SR. In this connection, possibilities to accelerate the shift in the NGO's role, from direct intervention towards enablement, should also be identified.

5.5 Factors influencing growth towards SR and lessons learned

31. In the experience of **ICCO**, certain factors seem to play a conducive or hampering role in the process of 'growth towards SR'. First of all, contextual factors, in the sense that SR may be more easily achieved in Southern Indian states than in the North; this is ascribed to more stable governments in the South, more programmes for the poor and a more mature NGO community. Other 'cross-cutting' factors, too, play a role in ICCO's view. The kind of grassroots involved, for example, is also seen as relevant for attaining SR, viz. tribals when still disposing of their own culture and collective resources are seen as probably having an advantage; women, too, may be more ready for SR than men for reasons that are not yet quite clear; and the situation of the urban poor may well be different--indeed, more rapidly demand SR--from that of rural poor.

32. The **NGOs**, too, identified a range of factors they had learned to consider in promoting SR. These range from macro conditions (viz. effective decentralisation²¹, government programmes and political space), to the physical resource base of the poor and to their skills, risk-taking capacity, solidarity and so on. A North-South division, too, in their view has a certain validity, yet in combination with other factors such as those just mentioned. Of importance are also the NGO's own timing of SR, together with its transparency and capacity to play a catalysing role. And with reference to the kind of grassroots involved, the question whether tribals have comparative advantages--being outside the caste system and especially when still having preserved their own culture, values and identity, and controlling collective resources--appeared to be controversial. More consensus seems to exist with regard to such groups like women, urban (construction) workers and small farmers becoming self-reliant more rapidly than, say, landless labourers.

33. The **CBOs** themselves were not systematically asked what important lessons they had learned in their progress towards SR, being so directly involved. The women--and often this was acknowledged by the men present--said they were more readily able to carry on independently than men. As other favorable factors were mentioned the homogeneity of a community (in terms of class and caste) and the existence and support of an apex-organisation.

5.6 Agreements on SR between ICCO and its partners and between NGOs and CBOs

34. A number of cases were found where **NGOs** and **grassroots organisations** had jointly defined a rough and broad timeframe for their relationship and the modification thereof, but this was the exception rather than the rule. That is, there are NGOs which at this moment work with groups of 'autonomous' or 'independent' communities. The impression exists, however, that in such cases it was usually the NGO rather than the CBO which took the initiative, was the driving force and tried to adhere to the timeframe. We have found no evidence whatsoever of any instance whereby it was the CBO itself which had demanded the NGO to recognise it as a 'self reliant' community. In exceptional instances, an NGO and CBO used the PMES and relied on an agreed set of indicators for the transfer of schemes, assets and roles and/or for the demarcation of clear stages. Formal or even informal agreements between NGOs and CBOs in relation to SR have not been found. More often than not, NGOs did have a rough timeframe in their head, but **without** discussing it explicitly

²¹ In Bihar for example, so far there have not yet been any panchayat elections

and transparently with the grassroots organisations it worked with²², let alone reaching some understanding or agreement on a SR scenario.

35. By way of concluding comments, one could say that quite a few NGOs are reaching the point in their intervention cycle where villages or communities become independent and the NGOs begin modifying their relationship with them; for example, working more with second than first level organisations, setting up new supporting institutions and so on. Much of this still happens in an improvised manner and without much explicit planning and implementation, indeed, without a mutual and transparent accountability on the part of both parties. The impression exists that this is often not so much due to a lack of interest or unwillingness, but to lack of know-how, concrete methodologies and readily understood instruments.

36. On the other hand, there is a connection between the self-reliance of NGOs and the promotion of self-reliance on the part of grassroots organisations. During seminars held at the end of the field-study, this connection arose rather clearly: there are NGOs which fear that once the grassroots organisations they work with achieve self-reliance, they--the NGOs--'get out of business' and their continuity is threatened. The opportunity, indeed, the need for: (i) tackling new grassroots communities with the help of a (possibly improved) intervention cycle, and/or (ii) another intervention cycle (including a transformation of their own role) vis à vis the now (more) 'self-reliant' grassroots organisations, is often hardly perceived. Clarity and transparency on these points among NGOs, grassroots organisations and financing agencies is badly needed.

5.7 Capitalising reforms (especially decentralisation) for purposes of self-reliance

37. To what extent were the opportunities offered by the present process of decentralisation and local government in India, being capitalised by NGOs in order to promote the SR of grassroots organisations they work with? An empowerment and claim-making strategy of the poor, did it not receive a notable push and a better environment, owing to decentralised social policy making and implementation? Did NGOs and CBOs capitalise the potential of decentralisation at: (i) the political level by improving the access of the poor to local elections and delegates, and so achieve more power in the process of decision-making concerning the allocation of resources, and (ii) the socio-economic level: getting more access to the flow of financial and technical resources and inputs targeted at the poor? The general answer to these questions would seem to be: yes, but only where decentralisation is being effectively implemented, something which happens only in very few states (Kerala, certain parts of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh). In most cases, however, notably less power is being granted to, and far fewer resources are reaching, the local (panchayat gram) level, than was originally hoped for. Hence, it would be naive to expect much from this reform.

38. Besides, other changes in policy at the macro level such as globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, often render the conditions for SR of poor communities more difficult, in the view of some NGOs: they report that whereas costs of living rise, due to the elimination of subsidies on food and inputs, prices of output produced by their grassroots groups did not notably rise or even decline (in certain instances due to imports). Hence, such structural adjustment policies help create 'new poor' amongst those who already were developing some capacity to generate a marketable surplus. Moreover, collective entitlements to land as in the case of tribal areas are being lost, the land-market is liberalised and access opportunities get privatised. Therefore, in the view of these NGOs, optimism with regard to the market conditions for SR cannot simply be warranted. Obviously, further research is needed on these points.

²² Indeed, at times the NGO was afraid to touch this issue out of fear that the grassroots would feel abandoned!

Conclusions

39. Formulating our conclusions briefly in terms of the guiding research questions, the following answers can be formulated:

(1) None of the agents involved--neither ICCO nor the NGOs, Dutch Ministry and the rural poor themselves--had and applied a clear, agreed and operational concept of SR. Whatever definitions existed, varied both among and between agents.

(2) All agents have a notion of 'growth towards SR' and of 'stages', even though the notions of the nature and length of the process, and about the character and number of stages, vary notably.

(3) None of the agents has a specific SR policy or intervention strategy. ICCO does have a great interest in SR and in developing such a policy, and has been thinking about it. Likewise, NGOs and CBOs do possess a rich experience in promoting grassroots development *de facto* implying SR; however, this experience has not yet been conceptualised or organised in terms of a process towards SR. In the course of this process, quite a few components have emerged which can be considered relevant material for a SR strategy. The NGOs, like ICCO staff, have also identified a set of factors which influence the process of growth towards SR, at the level of context, the NGO and the grassroots.

(4) ICCO and its partners, the NGOs and CBOs, do discuss SR as an object of policy but, so far, mostly in an uneven and unsystematic manner. No agreements have yet been formulated, nor has SR been made an objective handled through a Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation System.

(5) In view of the highly uneven but in most cases very limited implementation of a decentralisation policy in India, few among ICCO's partners have been able to capitalise such a reform for purposes of promoting SR.

Implications for policy

General

40. Given the fact that SR is already on the agenda of ICCO and its partners, and that the latter dispose of many crucial components of a SR policy and intervention strategy, what remains to be done is organise and accelerate the formulation of that policy and the corresponding strategies and instruments.

41. ICCO will need to work on the articulation of a clear SR policy, the definition of SR as an objective with its corresponding indicators, and the instruments for the implementation of this policy at the level of intake, review, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Discussion and consultation with other donor agencies in Holland and nearby countries will help reach a broad and maybe operational agreement on what lines to follow in this area. ICCO should discuss its proposals with groups of partners, both from India and elsewhere. Some follow-up studies on certain issues, identified in the analysis above, are desirable to help elaborate certain aspects of this policy.

42. The **NGO-partners**, too, should discuss specific SR policies and strategies for their own sake and not just because it is important for an agency like ICCO. In working on their SR policy and strategies, NGOs should utilise and systematise their own rich experience, carry out some applied research for this purpose, and make an effort to come up with operational SR strategies in the near future. The latter should possibly be differentiated in accordance with context, sector and kind of grassroots poor, in order to guarantee the viability of these strategies. Here, such factors like available political space or price policy, access to land and special existing programmes for tribes, harijans or women must be taken into account. The SR-strategies should capitalise the NGOs' own learning process, and explicitly attempt to accelerate the process of reaching the point where CBOs become 'autonomous', involving an earlier shift of the NGO's role, from direct intervention towards enablement. This way, the new SR policy will help make the NGOs' 'installed capacity' available for new needy communities as well as for continued support for (apex organisations of)

'autonomous' communities, possibly in a scenario of 'growth' rather than sheer 'survival'. The NGOs (not necessarily limited to ICCO partners) should discuss these proposals with donating agencies (not necessarily only ICCO).

43 **NGOs and CBOs** should discuss SR as an agreed objective of policy and intervention strategy, and where possible reach an agreement thereon. This agreement ideally accepts the SR of the CBO as a common objective and guideline for intervention and collaboration, from the very start, and it spells out the details of SR-focussed interventions and the corresponding timeframe.

Specific suggestions

Drawing upon experiences and lessons learned by NGOs--including the 'logic' already being applied by them to SR--we as outside researchers made an attempt to put several elements together which may help inform and organise the coming discussions and dialogue as intended above. The latter can then modify, amend and enrich this set of ideas and help lay the basis for a veritable SR policy.

44. Some **general concept of SR** is needed, supposed to capture 'the' core element of SR. Without such a general concept of SR, agents will not know what they are talking about. We propose the following definition pitched at the community level: 'the capacity of a poor community to manage its own affairs'. When unpacked in terms of **indicators**, this concept of SR includes a capacity for decision-making, applying a PMES to its development activities, resolving internal conflicts, organising internal and promoting external resource mobilisation, and for maintaining a sustainable level of participation. This definition has the advantage that it finds a basis in CBO views and NGO practice. Moreover, in a 'hierarchy of elements' it puts the one considered most essential up front, locating others around it as indicators and preconditions (see below). The process of growth towards SR proceeds from and closely interacts with the latter.

45. **(Pre)conditions** of SR should also be identified; to mention those most frequently referred to: an adequate level of identity and organisation, a good human and financial resource base, information and a knowledge of rights and existing opportunities, an apex-organisation and empowerment vis à vis external agents. Concretely speaking, these conditions obviously vary in accordance with the kind of sector and grassroots selected, for example, they should be gender-specific when it comes to define the problems of a women's movement, and relate to specific ethnic groups where problems of a tribal community are concerned; and they should include detailed information on prices, costs and demand where micro-producers are involved. Conditions, likewise, will vary with the kind of SR concept and development strategy applied, for example, emphasize (perceived) capacity for mass mobilisation and bargaining in a 'political' empowerment strategy, and, rather, technical-economic skills and access to resources in an inclusive 'developmental' strategy.

46. In order to put together a **possible SR intervention strategy** based on NGO experience and meant to achieve SR and the (pre)conditions thereof, what is needed is a participatory process of NGOs and CBOs. This process should lead to an **agreement** (not contract) between them. This agreement and the SR-intervention strategy derived from it, spells out various components and steps: (i) SR is defined as an agreed objective from the very start, including its operational indicators; (ii) a timeframe is defined (possibly after a short exploratory period) in broad and flexible terms for reaching that objective, as a working hypothesis; (iii) then a systematic SR-promoting programme of activities is implemented, based on the development of an adequate organisational, human and financial resource base, and on the capacity to manage the community's affairs both internally and externally²³; (iv) a progressive but (ex ante) programmed transfer is carried out, of

²³ With some room for experimentation in terms of the timing of transfer: comparing the viability of an early transfer combined with in-service-training, with the more common and gradual process of transfer only once all conditions have been established previously (cfr chapter 6).

schemes, assets and roles from NGO towards CBO and/or its specialised committees; (iv) all of this proceeds over time, in accordance with agreed 'stages' which eventually lead to the emergence of communities recognised as 'autonomous' (insofar as the NGO is concerned); (v) meanwhile a joint, participatory PMES and agreed indicators are being used to guide, monitor and evaluate this process of growth towards SR.

47. **Contentwise**, the SR strategy consists of: helping to establish an empowerment base of the poor; organising them on the basis of their own identity, leadership, community fund and bargaining skills; and enabling them to claim and obtain entitlements from public and private sources. The empowerment base, in turn, is combined with the development of the capacity of the poor to identify and develop their own initiatives--especially in the field of income and employment generation--involving the mobilisation of both internal and external resources. The strategy also goes hand in hand, over time, with the gradual formation of first, second and higher-level associations which act as a pressure group, help support and supervise first-level organisations, sustain efforts to democratise local government, and also serve as pegs for joint socioeconomic ventures in the field of financing, marketing and production.

48. To help this process grow and render it sustainable, NGOs and CBOs, with the assistance of agencies, develop **supporting institutions** in the field of human resource development, finance and marketing as well as productive ventures.

Implications for research

49. The study generates a set of questions for research in various areas. One is the need for research in other countries than India where SR played an important role as an ideal and concept during the independence struggle. What knowledge and view of SR exists in other countries? Both inside India and elsewhere follow-up research is needed on subjects like the following:

50. What are the possibilities **and** limitations of SR for various groups and sectors? What conditions render SR more or less viable? Obviously poor groups suffer from serious--including political and economic--constraints, and SR may often be only viable provided they enjoy external support from allies complimenting their own resources. And if in order to make their interventions sustainable CBOs develop their own supporting institutions (e.g. in the field of credit, marketing, training etc), how can the latter be consolidated, with a reasonable degree of autonomy? So far there is still little known about such pertinent issues.

51. More precise knowledge is needed about the dynamics between NGOs and CBOs in the process towards SR. Even when based on agreements **ex ante**, 'withdrawal' often remains a difficult process associated with tensions and internal struggles over positions, resources and funds. Is it necessary to accompany CBOs with 'crisis management'? Can this be handled via their own apex-organisations? What are the milestones of success, what the red zones in this gradual growth towards SR?

52. If decentralisation helps NGOs and CBOs less than anticipated, can partnerships between public agencies and poor CBOs still be of use? Or can such partnerships be found only in states where decentralisation is effective? How do they function? Have they helped CBOs to become more independent from NGOs?

ANNEX 1

TOR PE 73: SELFRELiance OF TARGETGROUPS

1. Background and objectives

Introduction:

This Programme evaluation is being conducted under the joint responsibility of DGIS/DSI and the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and focuses on the theme: "Selfreliance of Targetgroups of NGO's".

Programme Evaluations are one of the policy- and management- instruments of the Dutch Co-Financing Programme. The purpose of this instrument is three-fold:

- to study whether activities, supported by the Dutch Co-Financing Organizations, are in accordance with the policy frame, as formulated in Art. II of the Co-Financing Agreement between the ministry and the co-financing organization;
- to contribute towards policy discussions of the parties involved in the PE concerned;
- to contribute towards a further improvement of the Co-Financing Programme.

As can be concluded from Art. II of the Co-Financing Agreement, the Promotion of self-reliance of groups and individuals, living below the poverty line, is one of the main objectives of the Co-Financing Programme:

- Parties aim at ... sustainable improvement of the position of poor groups and individuals (art. II.1).
- The Co-Financing Programme aims atpromoting active participation of the targetgroups intheir society; enabling targetgroups to arrange for those facilities which are necessary to make both ends meet, also on a long term basis(art. II.2).

Next to the above, one can observe that the activities of many partners of the Co-Financing Organizations, often collectively named as: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), are explicitly or implicitly aiming at assisting socio-economically disadvantaged groups in their societies to break through the vicious circle of poverty in which these groups are caught and which keeps them dependent on the mercy of others for their survival. This aim is most clearly present in so-called comprehensive development interventions. These comprehensive development programmes of NGO's are often also called 'community development programmes' or 'integrated development programmes' usually, these programmes consist of interrelated activities such as: organizing and strengthening local interest groups, facilitating social services (e.g. access to health, education), and promotion of income of poor households (e.g. creation of employment, increase of wages, access to credit, agricultural development).

For many NGO's the tests of success are whether their clients or partners become more self-reliant and are able to preserve their clients or partners become more self-reliant and are able to preserve their independence, also vis-a-vis their "partner-ngo". The importance of this subject among the NGO-community is illustrated by the frequent and lively debates about issues like: self-reliance, withdrawal-strategies, phasing-out strategies, etc.

ICCO's overall policy is closely linked up with both the objectives of the Co-Financing programme and the objective of promoting self-reliance of the poor.

In its general policy document ICCO formulates its objective as follows: "ICCO concentrates on supporting local and national initiatives aimed at increasing the power of the poor to make their

own choices and to help create the conditions which facilitate such a process" (Signs of Hope, page 6).

Problem description

In spite of the many evaluative studies regarding the performance of NGO's, very few studies have been carried out which systematically assess the degree of success regarding the central theme of promotion of self-reliance of target groups. Therefore, the insight both among funding agencies and NGO's is limited into factors which contribute towards the success or failure of NGO-policies to effectively promote independence among target groups.

Specific objective:

In addition to the above mentioned general purposes of Programme Evaluation, the specific objective of this Programme Evaluation is to formulate guidelines to ICCO how it can focus its funding relationship with partners, who directly or indirectly aim at promoting self-reliance of their target groups, on this subject more systematically during both the planning phase and during the monitoring and evaluation phases of the project cycle. Thus, this study will provide ICCO with better instruments to learn from experiences, which in turn still stimulate to pay more attention to this central theme in its future policies.

Choice country:

Since the late seventies, ICCO supports a substantial number of integrated programmes, which aim at assisting target groups towards self-reliance, in India. Therefore, this Programme Evaluation will be carried out among partner organizations in this country.

2. Main research question and specification

Self-reliance is understood as: the ability of people or people's organisations to effectively take their own decisions (without being dependent on outside parties). This ability is dependent on three interrelated dimensions, which will be distinguished for analytical purposes: a) ability to establish and maintain local organisations; b) capacity to get access to services (claim making capacity); c) economic standard: a minimum level of living has to be assured. If all three conditions are fulfilled, self-reliance is a fact; if these are partly fulfilled, the self-reliance is to be considered as partial as well.

Against the background, as described under 1. above, the main question to be addressed by this programme evaluation is:

"To what extent and in what respect(s) (i.e. socially, economically and/or politically) have ngo's conducting integrated programme, been able to promote self-reliance among their target groups effectively?"

This main question leads to the following research questions (case studies):

1. Is the promotion of self-reliance among target groups of NGO's considered as an explicit and crucial objective in integrated programmes and in ICCO's policies;
2. To what extent has the promotion of self-reliance been implemented, monitored and achieved;

3. How has this policy affected self-reliance of target groups, or the policy of promoting self-reliance among its target people, affected the role, the position, tasks, etc, of the ngo concerned? (Analysis of the findings);
4. Which factors explain successes and failures in this respect? (Recommendations);
5. How could ICCO promote this objective through its funding instruments more effectively.

In the elaboration of this main question into specific research questions, explicit attention will be given to the following aspects:

- a. policies of ICCO: importance given to self-reliance in various policy documents (general policy document, country policy India/Bangladesh: planning and review papers, funding instruments, internal studies and discussion papers);
- b. policies of partners involved in integrated programmes: importance given to the promotion of self-reliance in their approaches and strategies;
- c. assessment of the degree in which interventions have been successful in promoting social and/or economic self-reliance among targetgroups (socio-economic characteristics of target groups, comparison position now as compared to position at the beginning of the intervention, differentiation of outcome for relevant sub-divisions among the targetgroups such as a) men - women, b) caste background, c) profession, d) any other relevant sub-category);
- d. assessment of effects and impact of self-reliance at household-, community- and area-level (sub-divisions as under c, gender perspective, sustainability);
- e. recommendations to ICCO, based upon an analysis of the outcome of the observations regarding the points mentioned under a - d.

3. Implementation of the study

Preparatory phase:

The preparatory phase includes a desk-study and will result into a Plan of Operation.

The desk will pay attention to:

- a) relevant policy documents of ICCO;
- b) file of types of intervention supported by ICCO since 1980 in India;
- c) selection of partner organizations to be included in the field study;
- d) detailed study of documents available on policies and policy implementation of the selected partner organizations;
- e) operationalization of key-concepts regarding promotion of self-reliance among target-groups (see para 2).

The plan of Operation will cover:

- a) specification/clarification of research questions;
- b) objectives of the field study;
- c) a further operationalization of the research questions;
- d) approach of the field study (which organizations and third parties will be included, research methods to be used, time-schedule);
- e) distribution of tasks among teammembers;
- f) further details about the report;
- g) if relevant: adjustment of the budget.

Field study

Tentatively it is expected that the performance of 4 to 6 partner organizations will be studied more in detail.

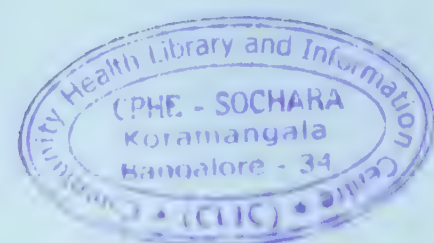
Apart from local case-studies, the team will meet with representatives of relevant resource organisations (governmental and non-governmental). A seminar, to discuss and deepen various aspects connected with the theme of the study may be organized during the field study.

The Plan of Operation will describe the field study in further detail.

ANNEX 2 WORKSCHEDULE FIELDWORK

Travel schedule Programme Evaluation 'Self Reliance Grassroots' ICCO in India, from 10th of August to 7th of September.

10th August	Arrival New Delhi at 22.50
11th--12th	Preparations fieldstudy & seminars with FAIR and Acharya
13th	Departure for Patna (Bihar) by IC809 (10.00-11.00 a.m.); picked up by Assefa team, travel by jeep to Gaya district
13th--16th	Fieldvisit to ASSEFA -Communities in Gaya and Jamui (Gaya 2 x in hotel, in Jamui 1 night in ASSEFA guesthouse)
16th	Departure for Patna, to catch Amritsar Howrah Express for Calcutta (leaving Patna at 21.40 and reaching Calcutta at 07.25)
17th	Stay over in Calcutta; catch train 6003, Hawrah-Madras Mail, for Howrah Khurda Road Station (leaving Calcutta at 20.15 and reaching Khurda Road Station on 18th at 04.50), visit THREAD Headquarters during the day
18th	From Khurda Road Station to Rayagada, by Hirakhand Express, leaving at 20.00 and arriving at Rayagada at on 19th at 09.00; after freshing up in Hotel Kapilas, leave from there onwards by Thread Jeep to go to district of Orissa for field visits
19th--21st	Fieldvisits to THREAD communities (1 night in govt guesthouse; 2 nights in hotel in Jeypore)
21st	By Thread Jeep leave to go to Vizanagram (Andhra Pradesh) to catch train Konark Express, leaving at 20.20 for Vijayawada and arriving there on 22nd at 09.30; transported from there by CRD Jeep to Guntur
22nd--25th	Fieldvisits to CRD communities, Guntur district, staying at hotel
25th--26th	Departure from Vijayawada to Chennai (Madras), by GT Express, leaving at 23.50 and arriving on 26th at 07.00; stay over in Madras and catch train from Madras to Madurai, leaving at 13.20 and arriving at 21.45, staying at hotel in Madurai (Tamil Nadu)
27th--29th	Fieldvisits to SIRD communities
29th	Departure for Chennai (Madras) by flight IC536, leaving at 18.15 and arriving Madras at 19.05; staying overnight at hotel
30th	Departure from Madras for flight IC537 to Bangalore (Karnataka), leaving at 13.05 and arriving at 13.50
30/8--02/9	Stay at Bangalore (hotel), preparing text & materials for Seminars
02--03d Sept	Seminar I at Search Conference Centre, staying overnight
3d	Departure for New Delhi by flight IC404, leaving at 19.50 and arriving at 22.30, moving straight from Airport New Delhi to Seminar Center 4th--5th
	Seminar II at Conference Center, staying at Scholar's Guest House (2x) of the Jamia Hamhard University Campus
5th--6th	New Delhi (hotel) to (i) settle accounts with SEARCH, FAIR and Acharya, and (ii) discuss with Acharya the preparation of the report and its various components (including questionnaire report, case studies and general conclusions and recommendations)
7th	Departure for Holland by KL849, leaving at 06.45 and arriving at Amsterdam at 12.00



VOLUME II: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This Volume II of the Report consists of a series of Supporting Documents which accompany Volume II. The latter offers an Executive Summary, the justification for the Programme Evaluation and of the guiding research questions, a brief summary of the views and practices of ICCO, its partner NGOs and DGIS in relation to Self Reliance (SR), an extensive analysis of the dynamics of SR among rural poor communities in India, and a concluding section providing the main results, conclusions and implications for policy.

Volume II offers a set of documents which help understand the analysis provided in Volume I. They deal, respectively, with the frame of reference and design of the programme evaluation, offer a more extensive discussion of ICCO's views as well as of the views and practices of its partner-NGOs with regard to SR of the grassroots in rural India. This data base of this discussion consists of structured interviews with staff, a desk study on the files of ICCO and a survey among the NGOs. Reports writing up the results of these various research instruments are included.

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School of Planning CEPT
Ahmedabad

Frits Wils,
ISSAS,
The Hague

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CHAPTER 1 SELF RELIANCE: A FRAME OF REFERENCE OF ELEMENTS AND INDICATORS

This chapter provides a brief elaboration of the frame of reference of the study on 'Self Reliance (SR) of rural poor in India' as promoted by ICCO's partner-NGOs. This frame of reference is needed in order to handle the guiding research questions of the Programme Evaluation. As explained in Volume I (Chapter 1), instead of adopting from the start a fixed concept of SR, it was decided instead to keep the matter of definition open and try to identify the SR concepts, policies and intervention strategies (if any) of all the agents involved: the rural poor, NGOs, ICCO and the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation. In order to be able to identify, register and compare such views and practices, a checklist or matrix of SR was needed consisting of its principal elements and indicators, both as a general-generic phenomenon and as a dynamic process.

In the construction of our SR checklist or matrix, we first made an effort to problematise SR in its major elements, together with the staff of ICCO and of the Dutch Ministry, and utilise the scanty literature on this and closely related concepts. Afterwards an effort was made to operationalise these main elements into more specific indicators. The five research questions of the study together with the checklist helped to structure interviews, develop an itemised guide for the analysis of ICCO's files, construct a questionnaire for the survey among NGOs, and finally organise the fieldwork in the rural communities.

Below, we present the frame of reference of the study consisting of a checklist of elements and indicators.

1.1 Frame of reference of elements and indicators

(a) general elements

Let us start with what would appear to be some of the main elements of SR,--elements which can be translated eventually into indicators allowing us to measure change. The following should be included, according to different sources¹, at different levels. First, at the level of socio-psychological elements, referring to identity, assertiveness and self-awareness of one's own resources. These elements express the inner- or self-directedness side of self-reliance, the socio-psychological make-up of persons and a group which enables them to act 'from within'. From a set of firmly anchored feelings of 'self' and 'we', and of collectively held values which render them less permeable if not vulnerable to outside influences and to efforts (if not traditional beliefs and practices) to negate them, deny them identity and a significance in their own right.

Another cluster of elements of SR relates to social organisation, on the one hand, and, on the other, to focussed efforts to use that organisational base in order to build up a set of internal assets, mobilise local as well as external resources, a supra-local apex network and to access important platforms and institutions where decisions are made concerning policies and the allocation of resources. This second set of elements of SR fits into its more 'instrumental' side, the use of particular means (first and second level organisation) to reach certain social, political and economic ends. It links SR of the organised poor to their role in the development process and to their involvement in it in a self-directed and self-managed fashion.

¹ There is very little literature, as noted, on the subject of self-reliance of grassroots organisations. Of importance to the present study were discussions with staff of ICCO and officials from the Dutch Ministry, and earlier work on the NGOs' intervention cycle. In connection with the latter see Verhagen, K., 'Self-help Promotion', KIT/Cebemo, Amsterdam, 1987, Neggers, J. and Wils, F. 'Self Evaluation among NGOs and local organisations in Third World Countries', in CEBEMO, 'Promotion of Autonomous Development', Noordwijkerhout, 1987. The special issue of *Search Bulletin* (11.1, March 1996) on 'People's empowerment: NGO withdrawal vs NGO role transformation' was unfortunately not yet available at the time when this frame of reference was being developed.

Thus, at the level of identity and self-assertiveness SR includes:

- (1) identity related to own origin, condition and achievements
- (2) assertiveness (as opposed to vulnerability) in outside world
- (3) awareness of own potential and resources

At the level of 'instrumental' organisation and performance SR consists of:

- (4) having an autonomous organisation, independent of parties and other agents
- (5) capability to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate projects and learn from them
- (6) capability to mobilise both internal and external resources
- (7) accumulation of (physical) assets
- (8) linkage to and active participation in an apex organisation
- (9) representing a voice recognised by relevant outside agents
- (10) capacity to handle external connections and pressures

--O--

These ten main elements of SR are further elaborated below, together with their indicators. In each case, an effort is made to identify the most relevant sub-elements which lend themselves more readily to operationalisation and measurement when applying various research instruments².

(1) identity related to own origins, conditions and achievements

- explicit reference to own social, ethnic, religious and/or locational identity, origin and condition?
- emphasis on past performance and concrete achievements, transcending divisions?

(2) assertiveness (as opposed to vulnerability)³

- defense of claims and rights vis à vis others (even at HH level), authorities and/or powergroups?
- group members' demands being heard & redress in case of violations of rights?
- (insistence upon) group's plan being accepted as basis for negotiation & convergence, vis à vis NGO and GO agencies?
- demand that NGO and/or GO agents meet their obligations?

(3) awareness of own potential and resources

- group/CBO able to identify its (political, social) importance/potential?
- (awareness of need to) build up own resource-base, also for purposes of co-financing schemes?
- identification (and occasional use of) one's own-immediate and wider mobilisation capacity?
- feeling of safety due to support from group/CBO?

² The researchers' own experience in the field was the primary source to identify these sub-elements and indicators, but ICCO staff and a Consulting Group of experts also contributed to this listing. Later, the survey questionnaires, too, helped to enrich this framework.

³ From the NGO questionnaires six additional sub-elements were derived: -active and equal participation in societal life (macro); -self-confidence; -democratic values; -participation in decision-making; -women's right to resources; -integration of marginal groups

(4) *autonomous organisation and performance*⁴

- percentage of HHs (of total universe) belonging to group/CBO?
- how active is the majority of household-members?
- accessibility group/CBO including for most vulnerable sectors
- what kind of group: movement, organisation producing services, producers association, other?
- accepted leadership, with mobilisation capacity?
- leaders independent from parties, government etc?
- are there accountability procedures for leadership?
- human resources: trained cadre (rel'd to CBO's special interests, accounting, legal matters etc)?
- what participatory structure for decision-making (meetings, minutes, rules)?
- only informal or any formal recognition?
- are there statutes & regulations/bylaws?
- how many years already in existence?

(5) *capability to plan, monitor, evaluate and learn*⁵

- has the group/CBO a plan for short/medium term?
- is there some implementation structure (allocation of different tasks, relations)?
- some monitoring and evaluation system in place (who, when, what aspects)?
- is there an evolution in the previous areas (lessons learnt)?
- demonstrable tendency over time to increase the role of the group/CBO and decrease NGO/CP's role, transferring responsibilities from NGO to CBO?

(6) *capability to mobilise internal and external resources*⁶

- has the group/CBO an account & an accounting system?
- does the group/CBO have information on GO, LGO, NGO a.o. programmes & resources, and on related procedures?
- does the group/CBO have any connections with and access to GO, NGO and other CBO agencies?
- growing mobilisation capacity & practice for internal resources (community fund, levies, user fees, actions, incl. sanctions for non-compliance)?
- mobilisation capacity & practice for external incl. local (LGO) resources?
- what is the actual size and what kinds of (co)financing programmes are there?
- is there a diversification of sources of funding, including internal?

(7) *accumulation of (physical) assets*⁷

- any physical assets of the group/CBO (center, facilities etc)?
- financial and technical-organisational capacity to operate and maintain these assets?

(8) *linkage to and participation in apex organisation, networks etc*

- affiliation to apex organisation (network, federation of associations etc)?
- participation in programmes/actions of apex organisation?
- initiation of new contacts, networks

⁴ Here, from the NGO questionnaire we later got the following additions: -capacity for managing the CBO and its assets themselves; -capacity to support themselves financially; -capacity for conflict resolution

⁵ On the basis of answers from the NGO questionnaire, here we added later one item: -capacity to administer/manage programme results after NGO's direct support

⁶ On the basis of answers from the NGO questionnaire we added later: -own-resource based development; -CBO-controlled sustained development; -creation and expansion of opportunities for development; -income generation

Here we added later: -capacity to satisfy basic needs and alleviate poverty; -application new technology

(9) representing a voice recognised by relevant external agents (REAs)

- capacity to defend interests vis a vis others (also intra HH and intra-poor/CBO of on the part of women, younger people and weakest sector)
- defacto o deforma place in consultation procedure of REAs?
- group/CBO actually visited by (personnel of) REAs?
- representation on local, sectoral councils/ctees?
- modified relationship with NGO foreseen/carried out after project(-stage) termination?

(10) capacity to handle external connections and pressures

- does negotiating, bargaining take place with REAs (including other NGOs)?
- diversity of contacts, beyond original NGO?

The indicators above, together, add up to a checklist of elements which, in various combinations, would characterise a 'self-reliant' group or CBO, capable of carrying on without direct and continuing NGO support. Specific data will have to show how groups or CBOs actually profile themselves on this general list, on what and on how many elements different types of groups score positively, and which ones are (still) missing. The views and strategies of the NGO and of ICCO, too, can be 'scored' on this checklist, possibly together with the weights they attach to these elements and maybe to others not identified here.

(b) Growth towards Self-Reliance: a dynamic approach

Though SR can be considered, as noted, as the outcome of a process, it can also be seen as itself involving that dynamic process of 'growth towards SR'. The list of 'static' elements and indicators drawn up above, only represent one level of analysis, setting out the kinds of things one would like to see in self-reliant communities. But these elements do not spell out the dynamics of SR and the steps taken by different agents to achieve it. Therefore, additional elements are needed, together with their indicators. Indeed, here we can include a few of the guiding research questions of this programme evaluation.

(11) view and strategy in relation to promotion of SR

- is weight being attached to SR as an objective and why?
- is SR considered to be a viable objective or an illusory one?
- is there a view of 'growth towards SR' and possible stages here (differentiated maybe in terms of certain aspects of the group/CBO)?
- is there a view & strategy to promote SR?
- a view on factors (+/-) influencing growth towards SR?
- documents (policy papers, working docs etc) in ICCO, NGO, CBO on SR

(12) operational practices with regard to (promotion of) SR

- collective/group-discussions ICCO with NGOs/CPs on importance & strategies SR?
- discussions NGO/CP with CBOs on importance & strategies of SR?
- operational tools: concrete interventions to promote SR (training, institution building, endowment/other special financial support etc)?
- agreements amongst ICCO, NGO/CP and/or CBOs concerning (promotion of SR)?
- elaboration and discussion of measurable indicators of SR (incl. stages)?
- monitoring & evaluation on indicators of progress in SR (part of PMES? Included in evaluations last 3 years?)
- actual presence of 'withdrawal' from CBOs which met certain criteria of SR, redefinition of role and allocation of resources to other CBOs?
- actual modification in the NGO/CP's relationship with 'Self Reliant CBOs'? What connections are being maintained, if any?

(13) *CBOs' success in self-reliance*

- actual capacity of 'SR-CBOs' to carry on by themselves (PMES, mobilisation, connections etc)?
- what factors distinguish successful from unsuccessful cases of SR? What lessons have been learnt and possibly codified?

This above frame of reference, the checklist of SR elements, consisting both of 'generic' and more static elements as well as some related to the 'process of growth towards SR', underlies the whole study. It helps to raise concrete questions and to register answers. In the 'open' approach selected for this programme evaluation, it provides an indispensable instrument. However, despite its obvious advantages, it also entails certain risks which will be dealt with when we discuss the construction of the survey questionnaire.

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY: DESIGN OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

2.1 Introduction

Let us begin with a few preliminary observations. First of all, the present Programme Evaluation may be seen as one of the first efforts to map the problematic of SR, not on the basis of a theoretical exercise, but by scrutinizing the views and practices of the four agents most directly involved. This implies an approach **not** based on testing hypotheses (preempted by the absence of prior theory and research) but on exploring the field. By applying an **open, exploratory, 'inductive'** and **actor-oriented** approach, hopefully we will be in a better position to eventually help shape an 'emerging' field and concept of policy making and concrete interventions. More specifically, maybe convergence and divergence can be identified, at a conceptual and operational level, together with an agreed agenda of questions for future discussion, preparing the way for a subsequent process of policy making.

Secondly, India was chosen for this Programme Evaluation because of various reasons. Firstly, its NGOs already have developed some experience in the area of self-reliance. Indeed, already before independence days, SR was a well known concept and it still is being utilised in many circles. Besides, ICCO when reducing the number of its partners in that country in the early 90s, gave priority to what were considered as the more solid and effective NGOs; though at that time SR was not yet an explicit criterion, it did play a role. Hopefully, the varied experiences of ICCO's partners which remain, will provide valuable insights and lessons on this complex problem-area, with possibly wider applicability. These partners are spread over many regions of the country--more and less advanced--and they attend a wide range of poor people (see below), largely located in rural areas.

From a research point of view, the option for India implies that due to India's tradition and ICCO's earlier selectivity with regard to its partners and their comparative quality in the field of SR, conditions for the Programme Evaluation can be considered as possibly more 'favorable' than elsewhere. The results may thus be 'biased', to some extent, in the direction of reflecting a somewhat better-than-usual situation. On the other hand, as noted, there is much that can be learned from those who **are** wrestling and making some progress with this crucial issue; indeed, it is their good and bad experiences, the incentives and obstacles they meet with, which should form a rich ground for examining our subject.

A last observation. As will become clear below, as independent researchers we have not only tried to observe, systematise and analyse the complex dynamics of SR among the rural poor in India, and the ways in which ICCO but especially of course its partner-NGOs are trying to handle this issue. Throughout, as noted, we made an effort to maintain an analytical rather than descriptive level of writing. In doing so, we have also made an effort to **assess** the efforts of all agents and their results so far, from a SR point of view. This has meant that we make comments--both positive and critical--where it would seem to us that **from a SR perspective** lines of actions were optimal or less than optimal; and we raise critical questions which in our view deserve to be taken up and discussed further. Hence, though this is certainly not a regular 'evaluation', the reader will find both in this substantial summary and in the sub-reports attempts to identify strong and weak aspects.

The study as meant above is strongly actor-oriented, but includes to some extent the relationship between these actors. Instead of imposing a single definition of self-reliance adopted **ex ante**, it creates space for identifying and possibly comparing the ways in which four actors define this concept. However, by using as much as possible the same frame of reference on SR for all four agents, and by applying this throughout in all the different research instruments used to identify their views and practices, an important degree of analytical and operational unity can be maintained in the study. Various instruments are needed to capture and register definitions and practices.

This Programme Evaluation comprises **four research instruments** for data collection:

1. structured interviews with Ministry officials and ICCO staff;
2. a desk study on ICCO files (dealing with NGO partners in India);
3. a survey of (in principle) all of ICCO's NGO partners in India;
4. four case studies of ICCO partners to get the views and practices of the poor at grassroots level.

Each of these four instruments will be briefly discussed below, in their development and application.

2.2 Structured interviews of ICCO staff and DGIS officials

Structured interviews with ICCO's staff and DGIS officials on the subject of SR, helped identify their concept-definition of SR; examine whether and to what extent operational strategies were (already) being pursued in this area; what facilitating factors c.q. obstacles in their view were being met in promoting SR; and to what degree the different agents were already engaged in a policy or maybe even practical dialogue on this matter.

The interviews were also needed to help flesh out and adjust the above matrix of elements of SR and related indicators; important elements or indicators were included in the list thanks to these interviews, prior to its application in the questionnaire and in the desk and field studies. Another purpose of the interviews was to explore more and less successful SR- experiences, both in India and elsewhere, and identify possibly important factors which played a role therein. Such factors came in useful, later, when a basis had to be laid for the selection of cases.

The results of these interviews in The Netherlands are included in various locations of the report, very briefly in the executive summary and in somewhat more detail in the supporting document in Volume II.

2.3 Desk study on ICCO's files

A desk study on ICCO's files was carried out by Ms Janet van der Woude, a recent graduate of the Free University of Amsterdam who had spent half a year in India, largely among NGOs. This desk study included ICCO's policy documents and its correspondence with CPs during the 90s, using the above checklist of SR elements and indicators as a guideline. In principle, a sample was taken of some 32 NGO-partners in India, limited to those involved in integrated rural development programmes,--still ICCO's main policy area in that country. The file study helped throw light on the degree to which ICCO itself had already explicitly embraced SR as an objective; was involved in its application as an operational criterion for accepting/rejecting new proposals c.q. proposals for continued funding; as an important item in agreements with partners, to be checked during monitoring and evaluation; and as a subject for policy and project dialogue. The files on NGO/CPs were also scrutinised for: (i) possible strategies, actions and agreements of the NGOs in their relationship with grassroots groups in order to promote the latter's SR, and (ii) any reported change and progress of these CBOs on any of the SR-elements and indicators. As a result of this desk study, we obtained a better profile of ICCO, its NGO partners and the CBOs they work with, in the area of SR.

During the desk study additional interviews were scheduled with desk-officers which helped to get complementary information. The data gathered were codified per element and indicator, for ICCO and per NGO (see the desk study report). On the basis of aggregate data, Ms van der Woude identified general tendencies and a typology of NGOs, related to possibly relevant differences between them in terms of clarity with regard to SR concepts and/or strategy. This analysis was one of the factors which played a crucial role in the final selection of the case studies.

2.4 Field survey of NGO-partners in India

Next to structured interviews with ICCO staff and government officials, and to a desk study, a third research instrument was applied: a survey based on a questionnaire, sent to eligible ICCO NGO-partners. The survey was used in order to obtain overall, representative data on the NGOs which perform such a crucial intervening role in the promotion of SR of grassroots groups. In order to properly understand the SR-dynamics at grassroots level, the ideology, concepts and intervention strategy of the NGO are of strategic importance. After all, SR is strongly defined in relationship to the NGO and its capacity to help the organised rural poor to carry on by themselves, even when an NGO ends its direct support. As noted above, some concern exists with regard to this capacity of the NGOs, about possible paternalistic and dependency relationships in some cases, and the need to know more about the NGO/CBO connection. It was fully realised that the NGOs could never be considered a 'proxy' of the grassroots groups; only the fieldstudy of four cases could help bring them those into sharper focus.

The NGOs' views and practices in the field of grassroots SR, and possible variations therein, needed to be mapped carefully. A questionnaire was designed on the basis of the SR checklist so as to capture these data in some detail. But here the study faced a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, there was little time available for the study. A lack of enthusiasm if not resistance on the part of NGOs to fill out long documents could be anticipated; and then there was the urgent need to precodify questions as much as possible, in order to speed up the processing and digitization of the data. On the other hand, we faced the risk that NGOs when not confronted with open questions but multiple choices, consisting of precodified answers, would **not** tend to reproduce their own views and practices. Instead, our precodified questionnaire might well act as a vehicle of learning and 'conscientisation', in a field where so little systematic experience is available. And this--it was clear **ex ante**--might tempt the NGO respondent to select one of the 'desirable' options with a certain disregard for actual practice. Yet we accepted the risk, developed a highly structured questionnaire and sent it out. Checks in the field and during seminars after the fieldwork suggest that at least some NGOs did answer more on the basis of 'desirable' than 'real' options. But this is not the whole story. Answers often seemed more or less in tune with what was known about their practice (known at ICCO, from the file study, among closeby yet independent consultants, and from field study data). Besides, the lack of consistency we found in the questionnaires between different aspects of SR--especially between concept or objective and intervention strategies--reveals, if anything, that many NGOs have not yet thought through SR, at least on a conceptual level, and are not yet in a position to formulate a coherent statement.

Ms van der Woude with the help of ICCO staff, elaborated a list of some 82 ICCO-partners in India, in the field of integrated rural development. All of them received the questionnaire with an introductory letter of ICCO. The questionnaire seeks systematic data on: (i) the 'targetgroups', especially in terms of the condition of the CBOs at the baseline and the present, on all SR indicators, and specific targets for the short and medium term; and (ii) the NGO's own policy, methods and concrete interventions in promoting the SR of CBOs, the results and experiences they have obtained ('lessons learnt') and the factors which facilitate or hinder 'the growth towards SR'. When doing the data analysis for this report, we had received 47 questionnaires some of which were filled out only in a casual manner.

A special local researcher, Mr. Shrawan Acharya from the School of Planning in Ahmedabad, with experience in handling survey data and interest in NGOs and SR, distributed the questionnaires, collected them, processed the data in India⁸ and is responsible for their write up. The analysis from the survey data is presented in a special section of this report. They identify general tendencies and different patterns, both insofar as the NGOs are concerned and in relation to the CBOs. Clearly, the survey has its own 'value added' and though not wholly representative for the whole universe, the data go well beyond the usual limited set of case studies one finds so often in the field of NGOs.

⁸ CEPT, Mr. Acharya's institute, provided logistical support.

2.5 Case studies

In-depth analysis of a few well selected cases permitted a closer look at the dynamics of SR, especially at grassroots level. Criteria for selection were the NGO's degree of clarity of **concept** and clarity of **practice** of SR, in their work with poor rural grassroots communities. Evidence from the file study and the judgement of ICCO staff came in to draw up a short list of possible cases. A conscious effort was made to avoid focussing only on the NGO, but also concentrate on the grassroots groups they work with: on community members--men and women--and leaders of the organised rural poor; on tribals, harijans, scheduled classes, and women. These types of rural poor included small farmers, landless labourers and, in some cases, construction workers active in small cities. The NGOs selected concentrated on one or two of these types of rural poor. In practically all cases, women had their own separate CBO within the community.

The cases were spread over very poor states like Bihar and Orissa in the North, and somewhat better off states such as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in the South. This differentiation, according to ICCO, might be associated with differences in 'growth towards SR': the North being poorer and less endowed with poor-oriented government policies and a more developed NGO structure, than the Southern states. As noted, the cases also permitted examining SR as a process among grassroots groups which differed in terms of ethnicity, gender and social characteristics.

Through structured interviews with households (including women), cadres and leadership, we discussed first the community, its origins, organisation, the role of women and their organisation; the use of a PMES, development and management of a community fund, if any; relations and bargaining with local government, public agencies and banks; the mobilisation of internal and external resources; apex organisation; and concrete achievements obtained. The second part of the interview revolved around the origin and history of the relationship with the NGO; programmes of activities undertaken, modalities thereof and any transfer of schemes, assets and responsibilities from NGO towards the CBOs; definition and importance of SR and its implications; stages in growth towards SR and present condition; discussion and agreements with the NGO, if any, regarding SR, and maybe use of an agreed PMES in this connection; expectations in relation to the NGO, and what support if any the community hopes the NGO will (continue to) provide in future.

In general, it was clear that the case studies generated their own 'value added' especially with regard to the grassroots and their organisations. Despite the obvious shortcomings of these case studies, elaborated later in this report, the visits to 19 communities have thrown valuable light on the crucial relationship between CBO and NGOs, and on the different ways in which this relationship evolves over time with or without an explicit presence of SR as an objective.

2.6 Seminars

Two seminars were organised at the end of the fieldstudy, one in Bangalore and one in New Delhi. With the help of two consulting agencies, SEARCH respectively FAIR, some twenty-five to thirty participants discussed during one and a half intensive days the main results of this programme evaluation, its conclusions and possible implications for policy. Valuable comments from NGOs and experts like Dr. F.Stephen and Dr. N.C.Nath have, where possible, been incorporated into this report.

CHAPTER 3 SELF-RELIANCE IN THE VIEW OF ICCO AND OFFICIALS FROM THE DUTCH MINISTRY

3.1 Introduction

In this brief chapter we report on SR in the view of officials from the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation--responsible for monitoring and supervising the Dutch Co-Financing Programme--and of staff from ICCO's India desk. These two stakeholders agreed to do this programme evaluation on the subject of 'SR of rural poor in India', because they shared a common concern identified earlier. The views and, indeed, expectations of both agents were collected through a set of interviews structured on the basis of the (draft) research questions and checklist developed for this programme evaluation. The text below is largely organised around the former.

3.2 Officials from the Dutch Ministry

A structured interview with a number of Ministry Officials related to the subject and field of NGOs/CBOs, in one way or another, brought out that even though SR is recognised as an objective particularly in the Co-Financing Programme, the Ministry does not have an 'official' definition of that concept. Seen as a 'container concept' full of good intentions, it can only be grasped for the moment through by linking it to other concepts like 'ownership' of projects and programmes, grassroots 'participation', 'sustainability' and possibly to 'institutional development'. As a core element could possibly be seen decision-making with regard to resource utilisation, both at a personal and at a group level. But presumably ICCO, NGOs and grassroots may well have different notions when thinking about self-reliance.

A mechanical application of criteria and stages should be avoided given the variety of conditions, but the baseline must be well defined. Few NGOs seem to hold the view that they should render themselves superfluous. The Agencies, on the other hand, are shifting towards a more result-dependent mode of support, but have few instruments available to accelerate the process of change.

Among the factors affecting 'growth towards SR' were briefly mentioned: the complexity of human resource development for SR, which is very complex; the need for a certain scale for purposes of economic and political weight and viability; the possible opposition of local elites and the political-institutional autonomy of the NGO; the problems of many NGOs in tackling economic projects and helping CBOs to strengthen their economic base; the comparative advantages of women in self-help programmes.

The programme evaluation was seen as a good opportunity to promote the search for, and development of, a specific SR policy. The Ministry itself hopes to benefit from this study for its own policy making.

3.3 Views of ICCO's staff (India desk)

3.3.1 *The concept of self-reliance*

ICCO staffmembers from the India desk provided a rich set of elements and indicators of self-reliance, partly in response to a draft checklist developed by the lead-researcher and partly based on their own experience and insight. Below, their observations gathered during a set of interviews have been summarised schematically as follows:

General elements and indicators mentioned by ICCO staff:

- knowledge/information rights & use thereof
- voice, self-respect
- empowerment

- own organisation, leadership
- contribution of members
- active participation members

- relations with panchyat officials
- relations with local government
- mobilisation local (GO) funds

- relations with different actors/institutions (banks, traders, training institutes etc)

- capacity to absorb new technology & investments, taking care of operations and maintenance
- capacity to generate income & employment
- access to means for development (basic needs and economic resources/inputs)

For ICCO staff SR is obviously multi-dimensional, encompassing both socio-organisational, socio-political and socio-economic elements. They do not yet dispose of an agreed, more precise and operational definition of these various elements; moreover, subteams vary in the emphasis they put on certain elements over others.

All ICCO staff interviewed have a notion of 'growth towards SR' and of 'stages' grassroots people and their organisations pass through. A shared idea is that the first stage consists of awareness raising and organisation, followed by one of basic needs satisfaction and/or income-generation. The last stage is then one of 'withdrawal' or modification of the relationship between NGO and CBO. It was observed, however, that NGOs themselves especially when entering into the promotion of income generating activities are often not well prepared and need to adjust manpower and expertise.

There is not yet a single coherent policy statement of ICCO on SR. The India policy document of 92/3, however, stated that empowerment together with socioeconomic development should lead to SR of the targetgroups. This policy--especially in relation to empowerment--was reviewed in '96; this review helped to make many things clearer, including the fact that SR and empowerment are not automatically linked: much still depends how an NGO handles its relationship with a CBO, especially whether and how the latter's dependency on the former is or is not really diminished. SR is an issue raised during intake, monitoring and field-visits, more than in correspondence, and it is sometimes made an explicit concern in seminars with partners. It was one of the criteria used in the reduction of partners from some 230 to around 100; then special attention was paid to clarity of objectives and effectiveness; both of these included the (coherence of the) vision of partners with regard to their relationship with grassroots groups and the evolution thereof. But there is not yet a systematic set of indicators of SR, applied during intake and monitoring.

3.3.2 Factors influencing progress towards self-reliance

Among the factors which from the point of view of ICCO staff influence the process of 'growth towards SR'--and they have an interesting helicopter's overview--include those at the level of context, NGOs and grassroots themselves.

3.3.2.1 Contextual

Among the contextual factors were mentioned:

- level of development and ecological situation: the South compares favorably with the North in various ways: less ecological depletion/erosion, more active GO-programmes (also from an 'enabling perspective'), higher level of income and basic needs satisfaction, and a less 'feudal', corrupt and interventionist political environment
- besides, the older CP are in the South and they have progressed further on the road of SR of the TG than the newer CPs in the North
- tribals due to their collective resources and stronger social organisation present conditions more favorable to SR than outcastes
- sector too plays a role, as SR is easier to accomplish for example with regard to economic projects (informal sector, handicrafts etc) than in basic needs
- CPs in the urban context tend to more easily shift from one to another TG without necessarily having completed a complete cycle towards SR

3.3.2.2 NGO level

At the level of NGOs, ICCO staff perceived these factors as influential:

- vision and practice in relation to NGO-grassroots connection, including explicit awareness of the need for progressive SR of the latter;
- practising systematic promotion of SR from the very start, and apply monitoring to it;
- promote participation of the grassroots in all stages of the project cycle;
- limitation to number of core activities in which NGO has comparative advantages;
- combination of socio-political and socio-economic objectives and programmes;
- an identity of the NGO which is not paternalist/safety net;
- self-confidence of NGO that 'we will find another job'; less preoccupation with institutional continuity/stability;
- other than charismatic leadership;
- willingness to work with LGO/panchayat and promote grassroots themselves to do so without mediation by NGO;
- NGO's ability to work out relationships with other classes/groups than only grassroots;
- NGO not trying to act as a substitute of the GO;
- an evolving more 'business-like' relationship with the grassroots;
- acknowledging requirements of economic projects and adjust objectives, organisation and staff;
- instead of long contracts of 15 yrs with the grassroots which create dependency on NGO inputs, opt for shorter contracts; on the other hand, in long-term investment projects such long term contracts are needed to transmit modern technology, train human resources and set up an adequate organisation;
- chart an 'institutional landscape' so the grassroots can learn to connect on its own and mobilise those resources it needs;
- a process of promoting different kinds of institutions accessible for support to grassroots is still going on.

As we will see below, the results of the survey and fieldstudy tend to lend considerable support to many of the factors here identified by ICCO staff.

3.3.2.3 Factors at the level of the rural poor

ICCO staff also noted some factors at the level of the grassroots themselves which were deemed relevant for the 'growth towards SR':

- tribal as compared to outcastes and others: former often possess advantages due to physical as well as sociocultural resources and organisation;
- the effectiveness and drive of the grassroots themselves is a major criterion for their SR;
- an apex-organisation promoting SR;
- a mix of grassroots groups may present advantages (and not just disadvantages) as some may have a greater interest in SR than others and pull them ahead, but coordination is difficult;
- official and de facto recognition of a CBO by third parties (panchayat, LGO etc) is a condition for SR.

3.3.3 *Growth towards self-reliance*

When it comes to the dynamics of SR, ICCO's staff made the following observations:

- only some partners have a vision of the process and stages of SR;
- teams in ICCO vary in views of SR process; for one subteam the first stage consists of awareness raising and organisation, followed by a stage of income & employment generation; the latter lays a basis for a process towards SR but involves adjustments on the part of many partners;
- at the moment of intake, one of the points examined is the NGO's view and clarity concerning the relation between itself and the grassroots, and the evolution of this relationship (role transformation, withdrawal)

3.4 Concluding observations

Discussions with the three (sub)teams of ICCO and study of files and documents revealed a genuine interest in the subject of SR and even more than that: already concrete work is being undertaken in this area during communication, fieldvisit, discussions and occasionally even during monitoring and evaluation exercises⁹. They also show a capacity to point to concrete elements and even indicators of SR used in their normal work. Nevertheless, there still is an apparent lack of systematisation among the staff at the level of concepts, policies and instruments. To them, especially the linkage between SR and empowerment is of great importance, but as the latter concept too remains unclear, it does not help much. The linkage of SR with an economic base is also a current topic but, once more, as long as the latter is not substantiated, it remains only suggestive: do we refer to households, gender, producer associations, communal enterprises or what? to communal funds or supporting institutions? Here we move, in other words, still in circles. Also in terms of process and stages, little clarity exists, even though during intake and visits issues are raised related to them, especially in those cases where the partner does claim to apply some explicit SR-objectives.

It is evident that there is a good absorptive capacity in ICCO and room for systematic work and reflection on SR, in dialogue with other agencies and partners. Hopefully, the voice of the CBOs themselves will be heard, too, in this process. The Programme Evaluation and its results provide useful data in this connection, by drawing a profile of what the various parties are thinking, expecting and already doing in this field.

In the Dutch Ministry, too, officials are receptive to the idea of working towards a specific SR policy not only because it helps render an agreed general objective more operational, but also because it may well help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Co-Financing Programme.

⁹ Especially the file study provides interesting evidence of ICCO's concern with SR. This concern became more systematic in the case of those NGOs which wrote SR high in their mission statement and plans.

CHAPTER 4 STUDY OF ICCO FILES

Introduction

A separate desk study of ICCO files was undertaken during the early stages of the Programme Evaluation (PE). This study was carried out by Ms Janette van der Woude (MA Sociology, Free University) especially contracted by ISSAS for this purpose. She worked under the supervision of Dr. F. Wils, principle researcher of this PE. The purpose of the file study was to help assess and analyse ICCO's performance in the field of SR, in the relationship with its partner-NGOs in India; to review thirty-two NGOs in some detail from the perspective of SR, including where possible an analysis of their role in the relationship with the rural poor; and contribute to a first overview of NGOs from a SR point of view (maybe leading to a typology) which might help identify major issues and also cases for field-research.

The report based on the file study has the following sections: (1) Introduction and research questions, (2) Research Methodology, (3) General analyses of the contents of the files, (4) an Attempt at the identification of patterns among NGOs, and (5) Conclusions¹⁰.

4.1 Introduction and guiding research questions

Many questions can be raised by different stake-holders in the development process about the concept of self reliance. People have their own ideas about it without being able to give a proper definition. In the communication between donors and their partners, self-reliance and withdrawal are discussed many times without any clarity about the contents of these words. Self-reliance has many dimensions. The problems faced in reality to reach that stage are divergent, depending on the structure and approach of the NGO, the target groups, the area and so on. When the donors request their partners to concentrate more on the self reliance of their CBOs and think more about withdrawal as the latest step in this process, what do they take into consideration? There is limited insight into this process. Real guidance is impossible as long as there are no general guidelines that can be followed in the process towards self reliance, and no particular indicators are generally accepted which can be used in monitoring and evaluation. The necessity to increase our knowledge about self reliance and its possibilities in a particular context will be clear. It is also needed to answer questions like: *Do the donors understand this problem at all, do they understand us at all?* - put forward during a workshop about 'empowerment and role-transformation of NGOs'.

ICCO's programme evaluation is an important study into the problems and dynamics of self reliance. This desk study will contribute to a better understanding of the process among ICCO's partners and the way these NGO's and their targetgroups are dealing with the issue. In this study I will try to find answers to the following research questions:

- (1) do all parties involved (ICCO, NGOs/CP, the poor and their CBOs) have and already apply a more general and maybe even operational concept of SR, its elements and indicators? if so, how to they define SR?
- (2) do agents have a notion of process, of 'growth towards SR' and possibly of stages through which the poor and their CBOs have to pass before reaching it, possibly differentiated in accordance with elements of SR?
- (3) do these agents have specific policies and intervention strategies to promote SR? What lessons are being learnt in this field? Also, are factors being identified which influence the success or failure of efforts to promote SR among the poor and their COB?

¹⁰ In addition, a series of annexes have been worked out with a restricted circulation. These include (A) summary of each file with reference to elements of self-reliance, (b) Specified criteria for withdrawal of ASSEFA, (C) Specified criteria for withdrawal of AGRAGATI.

- (4) do these agents discuss SR as a joint and agreed objective of policy, especially ICCO with its NGO/CPs and the NGO/CPs with 'their' targetgroups/CBOs? Are concrete agreements or commitments made, also at the level of PMES?
- (5) are present reforms in India--especially decentralisation--being capitalised to promote SR of poor groups and their CBOs?

In order to guide this desk study, a preliminary definition of SR has been introduced, consisting of 13 different elements of self-reliance and their corresponding indicators as laid down in the SR checklist. This checklist is used, here, to help draw a profile of the agents' views of SR, both ICCO and its partner-NGOs. The checklist itself with its 13 SR-elements and indicators--referred to in Chapter (1) of Volume II--helps to organise the write up of the results of the file study, reported below.

4.2 Research methodology: some brief notes

As noted, to find answers to the guiding research questions, the files have been studied, using the matrix of elements and indicators of self-reliance as a guideline for asking and registering data. The intention was to see how CBOs actually profile themselves on this general matrix; on what and how many elements different types of NGOs score positively, and on which ones not. A number of 32 files have been selected by the South-Asia team of ICCO as being representative of all partner-NGOs engaged in integral rural development programmes. According to this team, these NGOs were also of interest in a study of SR as meant in the context of this programme evaluation. In order to get more feeling for the files and get to know the kinds of NGOs and possibly interesting cases, I first went through the summaries (KID-BEMOs¹¹) of all the NGOs concerned. This was interesting and useful for making in as far as possible a realistic planning; I came to the conclusion that at least two files should be covered in one day, to finalise the desk study in time. Because of this time limit, it was clear that the files could not be studied in too much detail. It was not possible to search for each and every indicator. Actually, this method would not have given a realistic picture anyway. If one has to read a lot before a particular element or indicator has been mentioned, it means that in general attention is not focussed on this issue anyway. Most probably, when finally a confirmation is found in the file of an indicator, this may well be a characteristic of one of the most advanced CBOs.

There were no general criteria for selecting the material I read on each NGO. This depended largely on what was available and how far a proper impression could be formed, checking every now and then with the ICCO staffmember handling the particular NGO provided he/she was present in the office. In general, a few steps can be described which were followed in every file. The KID-BEMO was the first document read. Some NGOs were not yet introduced into this system and then general information had to be found in other documents ("afweging", proposals written by ICCO staff, proposals of the NGO itself, travel reports and so on). Most of this information was read in addition to the KID/BEMOs. All this information was gathered in a green file. Apart from the green files, there were yellow files. The latter contain the correspondence between ICCO and their partner organisations; this was relevant for finding out whether or not SR was an issue in their communication. In the end I approached the brown files which provide all kinds of background information, varying from annual reports, evaluation studies to pictures and detailed maps of particular villages. I focused on the most recently annual report, evaluation studies and so on. It was too time consuming to study closely a process over the years within the NGOs. How they think about SR at present was considered most relevant. However, after reading all this material, I still had the idea,

¹¹ This term means, literally translated: Kerninformatie and Document en Beoordelings Memorandum, i.e. Core information and documentation about the CP and the Memorandum of Judgement. KID gives a structured information profile of each financing proposal and -relation. BEMO is a summary of judgements, rendered in the form of scores per lower part. It facilitates the decision-making and the process of monitoring.

in particular in the case of comprehensive documentation and information, that I did not fully do justice to the NGO and its activities.

During the desk study, I started to consider the travel reports as becoming more important. This had to do with the fact that I focused on the conceptual level of self-reliance. It was important to take the Indian context better into consideration, as it really is, and not just with a focus on self-reliance as if NGOs and CBOs daily concentrate on this subject. I tried to get a more realistic view of the operational practice of the NGOs. For putting self-reliance in a better proportional perspective, the travel reports of ICCO staff were a useful method.

At this point I would like to give an example of one of the travel reports where one of the ICCO team members writes:

"... after having visited this almost ideal village we came to a mountain village where the situation was less bright. The inhabitants saw their harvest failing, they could hardly collect fruits, could not find bamboo for their traditional wicker-work and had to share the scarce food with their animals. At such a moment no SIS kind of solutions comes into your mind (...). SIS and Sustainable Livelihood Security seem, in these kind of circumstances, empty concepts. You do not know where to start...."

These travel reports, especially in a desk study during which a researcher is far removed from the 'field', help integrate thinking (policy) and living (the field). In addition to information gathered from the travel reports, evaluation studies done by external agents (like FAIR) have been read, when time permitted. These are valuable, because of their (supposed) objectivity and reliable information about the real operation of the NGO. This objectivity is mostly lacking when NGOs report on their activities. Naturally, the partner itself tries to give an impression of their work that is as positive as possible, although this attitude cannot be ascribed to all of them. In case the NGO regards ICCO as an organisation for co-operation that can give useful insights and advice, and vice versa, they report also on the hindrances in achieving objectives. These hindrances are very important to include in this study and increase the insight into the (often difficult) road towards self-reliance.

After having the impression of having obtained a quite realistic picture of the NGOs, I made a data matrix, with all NGOs on the horizontal axis and the elements of self-reliance along the vertical axis. In this way, it was possible to get a better overview of their scores on the different elements. I checked their profiles with the ICCO staffmembers working with them. Some additional information has been included. The identification of general tendencies and relevant differences will be described in the following sections.

4.3 A general analysis of the data

First of all, I will describe the information collected about each of the 13 elements of self-reliance as set out systematically in the SR-checklist. This procedure will give a general insight into the content of the files and the importance attached to these elements, in so far as it could be ascertained from the files. Examples will be given which highlight the characteristics of particular NGOs and which will deepen our knowledge about the dimensions and problems regarding self-reliance.

4.3.1 Identity of the grassroots group or sector

4.3.1.1 Identity as related to origin, condition and achievements

Approximately 15 NGOs stressed in one way or the other the identity of their targetgroups in order to promote the self-reliance of their CBOs. In this view, a better psychological basis will contribute to a more sustainable development of the CBOs, at the level of awareness as well as at the level of income-generation. Identity is a very wide concept and many books are written to enlarge upon its definition. In this context, I will only reproduce the ideas and meanings given by NGOs and CBOs

to this concept. The clearest picture will come out when emphasising three characteristics of the NGOs concerned: a) a focus on tribal ethnicity; b) a focus on women's identity, and c) a focus on socio-economic position.

4.3.1.2 Tribal identity

Six of the partners concentrate exclusively on tribal groups. Five of them consider tribal ethnicity as an important factor which needs to be stressed in order to reach their objectives. In the CBOs of these NGOs, the awareness of tribal identity is high. The importance attached to this aspect is related to the fact that tribals can easily be fragmented by various political forces, and get bogged down in "economic determinism". One NGO (CORD) put it this way:

"Unless some of the positive tribal values are nurtured and nourished, there is a possibility of social disintegration as tribals".

THREAD writes that due to modernisation of society as a whole, a good measure of the traditional coherence of tribal communities and their ethnicity-related identity, has disappeared. Increasing individualism has taken its place. I think this individualism has affected not only the tribals as a group, but has decreased community-feeling in the villages in general. This implies a hindrance to be overcome when realising self-reliance. In most cases, a lot of attention is given to people's movements as a social movement. In case of KTDRC, the organisation itself can be considered a movement instead of an NGO. The importance of this characteristic is that the people feel united as tribals, and are no longer a weak section of society. In general, the tribals are considered as inferior in overall Indian hindu society. Yet once they experience a kind of power related to their numbers, they build up strong movements. They dare to step forward as a group. KTDRC and CORD are mainly focussed on the movement of the tribals; economic programmes are either not considered very important (KTDRC: 'these will lead to dependency') or are still in an initial stage (CORD). As far as Gram Vikas is concerned, its focus has been changed, which is interesting to note down:

"Gram Vikas aims at developing self-reliant communities that could stand up to any exploitation and demand their rightful share in development. A people's organisation was formed and together the people overcame indebtedness and pushed liquor merchants out of the area, gaining access to their land and rights to their produce. To a larger extent Gram Vikas succeeded in its initial aims....Once the people's confidence and organising power was built up, integrated initiatives to improve the people's health, education and economic standards were initiated. In all six projects, the aim is to build empowered communities capable of organising and managing their own development. To do this, the objectives are to improve the health status and educational levels of the people, in addition to improving their local environment and economic standards so that the gains can be sustained".

The other NGOs working exclusively with tribals focus more on aspects of their economic upliftment, in order to reach self-reliance. Depending on the particular definition of self-reliance being used, the different tribal CBOs are more or less self-reliant.

4.3.1.3 Women/gender identity

In order to increase women's and girls' power over decisions and resources, NGOs can make use of an integrated as well as a specific gender policy. NGOs that work with targetgroups exclusively formed by women and girls, are six in number. However, many more focus on the specific situation/position of women and organise them in **mahila mandals** in order to give them a special identity as a group (22 NGOs in total). Information regarding the emphasis of NGOs on women or gender identity is only collected from the files of CSR, ADITHI and AGRAGATI. CSR has a targetgroup consisting of poor young girls and women from female-headed households, economically backward women and socially backward women. This NGO focuses on the maltreatment of women. Because the cruelties that take place transcend the borders of caste, class and religion, identity is related to the gender-specific condition. To change the repression of women by existing social structures, is the main objective of ADITHI as well. The forming of a women

identity is related to the change in their lives due to the intervention of ADITHI. In general, the group's identity is very strong in the case of women groups. Much stronger than in case of men. This is reflected in the level of assertiveness of women, which is remarkably high as soon as women experience the security and power of a group.

4.3.1.4 *Collective socio-economic position*

In many cases, a criterion for selection targetgroups is the backward economic position, regardless of any explicit social, ethnic, religious or gender identity. It is important to create a feeling of being united:

"The people are proud of being a coolie and their identity is related to the group. The coolies dissolved differences of caste and gender while working together (...). The older CSUs are also an example for breaking with casteism (...). However, casteism has declined, not disappeared, not clear to what extent people hang on to their caste-identity" (70-82).

In so far as coolies are concerned, there is a very clearly defined group, living in an extremely 'dualistic' sector, where feudalism still exists. Another group, clearly defined likewise, is the group of ex-bonded labourers (RCDRC). Group identification is very strong because of shared past experiences and current situation. In the process of social empowerment, the recovery of the dignity of people is taking an important place. That is why CASA tries to be a facilitator to leave the people in their own value, so that they are able to set out their own development trajectory. Value orientation uphold and nurture positive changes which will be progressive and long lasting. CASA works with tribals but this characteristic has been discovered in three other NGOs working with **dalits**, tribals and economically backward people. They emphasise human dignity and importance of the lives of the targetpeople. Stressing human dignity contributes to a positive identity of either the individuals or the targetgroups as a whole.

4.3.2 *Assertiveness (as opposed to vulnerability)*

The importance of this element for reaching self-reliance has been acknowledged by a majority of the NGOs (20) covered, in one or other context. Many government schemes exist that can be approached by the poor. As long as they are not asking for or claiming these schemes, nothing will be implemented. This element forms the basis for building up strong CBOs. Assertiveness is strongly related to awareness-building as will be described under the next headline. A distinction needs to be made with regard to the level and extent to which claims are made autonomously. At the household level it is mainly the assertiveness of women that has been mentioned: they have become more vocal, and discuss at a one-to-one level with their husbands. When women form a women group, they have the feeling that this group is always behind them, which gives them courage and strength to speak out against their husbands. One step further is when women are increasingly contributing to the discussions and sharing the process of decision-making in the **village-sangham** etc.:

"Women have developed self confidence and acquired leadership qualities. They now come to the forefront of social gatherings and functions, and a good number have imbibed appreciable communication skills" (CARD).

A next step further is their demanding matters like equal wages, an increase in wages, claiming access to particular government schemes and so on. At this level, men also become more visible. Still women show more courage and devotion as soon as their organisation gives them a feeling of strength.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that some organisations (CRD, KASSAR TRUST) give special training in fundamental rights and Indian law, so that legal action against exploitation within and outside the village can be undertaken. The effect on the assertiveness is considerable. As a possible last step I would mention the participation of people of the targetgroup in **panchayat raj** elections

which has been promoted by six NGOs, three of them focussing only on women (THREAD, SEARCH, AGRAGATI). The importance of participation in **pamchyat raj** elections should not be underestimated. The possibilities however, are strongly determined by the state/area where the CBOs live.

4.3.3 Awareness of own potential and resources.

When people become more aware of their own potential, they have more confidence in taking up issues and can, as a result, become more assertive as they know what they are talking about. A distinction can be made between being aware of one's own potential and resources, and the action and results providing evidence of the outcome of this awareness. All the organisations do something on awareness- building and have some general recognised strategies; indeed, some NGO-specific strategies can be discovered from the files to reach a higher level of awareness:

- meetings; training and education
- organisation-building
- savings- and credit groups (GRAM VIKAS)
- mobilisation; direct action and campaigns
- income-generating activities (ADITHI and SEARCH)
- legal ownership of land, forest etc. (ANAND NIKETAN)

More names could have been written behind the specific strategy, but the NGOs already mentioned give some particular insight (see appendix).

There are two NGOs that focus only on the first two elements of awareness-building, and make CBOs aware of their own capacity and resources. For the rest they will give only training and advise in IGA and economic programmes (THREAD, AGRAGATI). According to ADATS, there is a never-ending friction around the balance between awareness-raising and economics. ADATS' point is that economic programmes are a part of the intervention-strategy to include the coolies in mainstream economy. For coolies themselves it can mean something different and their only reason for participating can be to achieve economic benefits. In order to avoid a dependent relationship between the targetgroup and KTDRC, they totally avoid economic programmes. Their opinion about awareness of own potential is as follows:

"By united activity, the tribals are able to overcome many of their socio-political problems and also they are able to gain lot of economic achievements for themselves (for example the movement against illegal cutting of trees). The success of this movement became an inspiration to the activists of other tribal settlements that they realised the strength of unity. Self-confidence especially via direct action instead of classes, camps, seminars etc. as awareness programmes. This creative approach has given them self-confidence that they can withstand any self problems facing them. Solve their own problems with the united approach".

A last example of again another point of view on raising awareness is given by TSRD:

"In general, TSRD considers economic improvement (incl. irrigation facilities, credit programmes) as a requirement, besides health care and literacy programmes, to make it easier to start other awareness programmes" (travel report '96).

It is interesting to compare this last statement with above mentioned points of view.

A result of awareness-building is that people get knowledge of entitlements: where to get what is meant for them, knowledge about government funds/schemes, ways to approach banks etc. Only a few CBOs are able to do this totally independently. Most CBOs receive guidance in approaching government and banks for schemes and funds. Even when the CBOs are considered self-reliant, some NGOs will still play the role of advisor and guide in this context. I give one example of making CBOs aware and make sure that they do something with it independently:

"Trained released bonded labourers participated in an exposure camp after which they have been sent to villages for a week to inform other released bonded labourers about the existing government schemes" (RCDRC).

The involvement of the targetgroup itself in making other people and villages, not yet included in the intervention programmes of the NGO, aware of different kind of things is an interesting process discovered in the files. This strategy contributes enormously to making people, or CBOs as a whole, aware of their own potential and capacity. In CRD's strategy this forms a very important part. In the first phase, CRD supports the organisation of poor in communities, gives material for NFE and awareness-building and so on. However, the support in this phase is mainly given by the already autonomous target groups of CRD.

4.3.4 Autonomous organisation and performance

All the organisations work with CBOs, though the way in which CBOs are organised, their strength and significance differ per NGO and strategy. There are NGOs that focus on the development of the whole village and form many different groups, operating more or less independently. These different groups are formed on the base of social activities (housing, health, livestock forum and so on), like ASSEFA, or more on economic/functional activities. Furthermore, these groups can include all the people in the village, men and women together, or make a separation between men, women and even **dalits** or tribals, and within this last group again split women and men. To increase the complexity of this element:

"villages can have single **sangham** or more than one **sangham** or more than one **sangham** of the same sector based on the need and the category of the people predominant in the village" (SIRD).

To structure the discussion somewhat, I will make two categories which will be divided into sub groups:

(I) representative CBOs: villagers are organised in a village **sangham**/committee/group that represents the whole village. There are a few possibilities of organising these groups:

- a. CBOs for the whole village
- b. CBOs for various groups in the village: women, men, youth, **dalits** and/or tribals

(II) functional CBOs; the groups are made on the base of a particular area of concern:

- a. service-oriented (health, education, livestock and so on)
- b. sector-oriented (landless, small labourers, irrigation-groups etc.)
- c. groups formed on the basis of a particular labour-activity; a kind of labour unions. These are not area-related in the sense that mostly people from different villages are forming the group which will look after the specific interests of their occupation.

In case of the functional CBOs, the forming of groups in the village is usually a means to reach the aim of proper implementation of programme activities (for example CECOEDECON, ADITHI). This approach is different from the approach of NGOs which consider building up strong village groups as an objective in itself (for example CSR, CRD, THREAD, AGRAGATI). Only when the groups are strong enough they start focusing on various other activities.

The sub-division (I.b) points at the different approaches to reach village development: integrating all groups of the village, or form separate groups for youth, women, **dalits** or tribals.

The fact that all NGOs work via CBOs is an important statement in itself. However, it does not say anything about the level of autonomy of the organisations. What is self-reliant in this context? Is it possible to compare a CBO which concentrates only on village health-care and operates independently, with a CBO that is responsible for all developmental activities in the village? If the

latter succeeds in managing all the activities properly but has problems with finances, do we consider it autonomous or not?

4.3.5 Capability to plan, monitor, evaluate and learn

In the strategy of fifteen NGOs, the role of planning and implementation by the CBOs is getting attention. Approximately twelve consider monitoring also as a task of CBOs and eleven (not necessarily the same as those mentioned before) do include evaluation in the strategy to make CBOs self-reliant. CBOs which seem quite independent in operating these activities are the targetgroups of CASA, SCHRP, TSRD, AGRAGATI, DASTKAR, CRDS, SIRD and THREAD. When CBOs are guided in these activities, it is done either by the NGO staff or by more experienced and advanced CBOs. It is not clear to what extent the CBOs in the former group get guidance from the NGO. To include other CBOs in the process, like CRD is doing, is an interesting way to make these groups aware of their own potential. In a few cases, it is the responsibility of special elected members/representatives to monitor and evaluate the programme activities (KASSAR TRUST, SEVA MANDIR, CORD, CRD).

Self-reliance, in this context, can mean different things. For example, in one case (ACTION FRATERNA) the focus is on independently monitoring and evaluating the Community Credit Funds (men and women separately). This is only one activity and in the other activities the role of monitoring and even planning is very limited. If planning, monitoring and evaluation is considered at village level and related to the capacity of CBOs to give direction to overall development, there are a few NGOs that really gives the targetgroups full responsibility, like GRAM VIKAS and THREAD. The former operates with PPPP, people's participatory planning process. Plans are made with the people in every village and many different kinds of activities may be begun, depending on people's wants and needs. Under PPPP the people are involved in every stage of each programme, from planning to post-implementation management. For GRAM VIKAS this participation in development activities is intertwined with efforts to mobilise and empower communities through the formation of people's organisations. The people are at the centre of all stages of development planning and management, to ensure that their capacities are built up over time, until they can carry forward their own development as a networking and united community. The way in which THREAD stresses the importance of self-reliance of CBOs in this context is as follows:

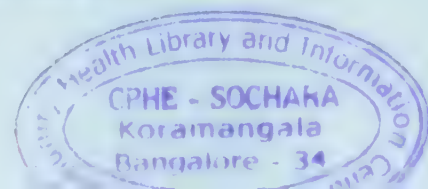
"The women groups make a plan of work (or annual plan) and on the base of this plan around twenty indicators are formulated on the basis of which the number of activities, the content, number of members and participants and the effects are measured. The project co-ordinator submits the facts to WIDE, which keeps, with the help of these facts, a total monitoring review of the state of affairs. This total review will be passed on to the different women groups of WIDE's network, so that they can also keep in eye on the overall developments and can talk to other groups about their work and operation. The evaluation and monitoring system needs to be worked out further, but this is already a good base to follow the progress of the work".

An interesting dimension has been discovered about the dialectic field of tension between the operation of a movement and sufficient attention for planning, monitoring and evaluation. This problem has been described in the file of RCDRC. There are some problems of co-operation with this organisation with respect to reporting/monitoring and evaluation and so on. This aspect is most probably also under-exposed in the CBOs. There are some more NGOs working via people's movements or being a movement itself (KTDRC). These NGOs do not show a very positive picture of independent monitoring of evaluation by the CBOs as well; a connection with the activist operation of these NGOs is possible.

4.3.6 Capability to mobilise both internal and external resources

Twenty three organisations pay attention to this element of self-reliance. Half of them (16) emphasise the possibility of getting government funds available for the poor. Mostly the CBOs are guided by the NGO to approach government and banks for funds. CBOs that search independently

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are the targetgroups of CARD (for bank credit, however, CARD approaches the banks), AGRAGATI (especially approaching local **panchyats** to mobilise funds, while AGRAGATI helps by arranging funds from government and private agencies), CRD, DASTKAR, ADATS and THREAD.

When NGOs stimulate the capacity of mobilising internal financial resources (ASSEFA, CASA, GRAM VIKAS, ADATS, ACTION FRATERNA, SEARCH, SIRD, VVD) they include credit and saving programmes in their intervention strategy. Especially saving is considered as an instrument for self-reliance. An interesting NGO applying this strategy is ACTION FRATERNA/RDT:

"Each of the **Sanghams** is provided with a fund called the Community Credit Fund. The **sangham** is totally responsible for the management of the CCF in terms of planning, disbursement, monitoring, utilisation and recovery of loans. The account provides credit for promoting self-reliance and to reduce dependency on landlords or traders. In order to foster self-reliance, over the years RDT has been gradually reducing its matching contribution".

This mobilisation of internal resources is sometimes considered as the best way to make villages self-reliant (ASSEFA, SIRD), while it can also be accompanied by an emphasis on mobilising external resources. SIRD has the following point of view:

"if the people's organisation relies on external resources for financial resources, it increased its dependency status. For sustainable development and functioning of people's organisation, the internal resources should be mobilised, need to increase in the people's contribution".

For CCD the internal mobilisation of financial resources is a first condition in order to consider their targetgroups as self-reliant. In two areas where they have been working since the eighties, they have withdrawn their financial support. People who were previously getting their honorarium from CCD now receive a higher amount per month from the community through their organisations. This internal mobilisation is stressed by the NGOs concentrating on health-care as well, like CINI and SCHRP; basic health-care is self-sufficient when the CBOs give an amount for the health facilities and pay the VHWS.

In the point of view of KASSAR TRUST the mobilisation of financial resources is considered very important in reaching a state of self-reliance:

"Economic activity program is an operation aimed at building economic self-reliance at the village level by optimising the available financial resources, by increasing access to finance through small savings and credit programme, by increasing the local bargaining power against external vested interests and by strengthening the internal food security"

For some NGOs the mobilisation of internal resources is a condition before the implementation of the programmes starts. The potential participants in the project have to pay before they can participate and benefit (for example SEVA MANDIR). An exceptional NGO in this context is GRAM VIKAS:

"The essential means by which RHEP aims to assist villages with regard to this is through the establishment of village corpus fund in each village, which when deposited in a fixed account, will accumulate interest as well as provide collateral security for future village loans that they might want to take from any financial institution for any common productive purpose. This fund, equivalent to Rs 1000 for each household in the village, is raised before RHEP implementation begins"

What also happens is that once people start participating in a community credit fund, they have to keep to particular rules. In the case of ADATS, there is a substantial drop-out of Coolie Sangha Units and individual families, because of the fact that they cannot fulfil the repayment of CCF loans.

A last aspect which I would like to bring to attention, is the importance of official registration of the CBOs. Some four-five NGOs take this aspect into account. This is important because only when the CBOs are registered officially, can they get government funds independently from the NGO and manage their own administration. ASSEFA has a particular approach. It founded a legally based

people's bank. The different people's forums have left their revolving fund with this 'Kosh' by authorising it to monitor their funds and dispense credit for their members. It will raise outside credit and distribute this to the villages (see appendix). In the conclusion of this report, this aspect and the possibility of funding the CBOs independently from the NGO will get some more attention.

4.3.7 Accumulation of physical assets

Seventeen NGOs are in one way or other giving attention to the accumulation of assets by CBOs. Most of the times, NGOs transfer ownership of assets to the CBOs in the course of time. Community centres built to facilitate meetings, are often constructed in co-operation with the villagers and will become their collective property. Some will transfer the property after completion of the project, others already at the beginning. The same goes for health centres. Village infrastructure will become the community's property as well. In case of IGA the organisations of the project beneficiaries will be responsible after the project comes to an end, for the management and maintenance of the developed assets, like irrigation systems, water pumps and so on (PRADAN, ANAND NIKETAN). With the increased awareness and education gained during the project period, the CBOs are expected to be in a position to do so.

There are NGOs that deliver assets themselves, while others make the CBOs aware of the existing possibilities to get things via the **panchayat**/government (AGRAGATI, CRD, THREAD). DASTKAR focuses on very specific producer needs like looms, which will be taken over by the group in the process. KTDRC delivers only some machines and nothing more, to avoid any form of dependency. Sometimes, goods and cattle is distributed by the NGO. This was done by CORD as well and it led to hostile reactions from the side of non-tribals. The media reported negatively about this operation of CORD. This example illustrates the danger of NGOs substituting government tasks. Actually, most of the assets can be obtained via government schemes. It should be stimulated more in order to promote self-reliance of the CBOs.

4.3.8 Linkage to and active participation in apex organisation

Nineteen NGOs include the building up of an apex organisation or movement in their intervention strategy. This is mostly done, keeping the idea of self-reliance of the CBOs in future in mind. In ASSEFA's strategy, the various village organisations form federations, which will be registered officially and in this way become more self-reliant. In addition to the intervention at village level, CASA focuses on also on uniting the CBOs in District Level Committee's which should operate totally independently in future. Resource centres are founded to facilitate the process of self-reliance. The building up of apex organisations is a part of the planned intervention strategy. Once the networking has been succeeded, the apex people's organisation will take over the responsibilities when the NGO withdraws. The same counts for PRADAN, GRAM VIKAS, SEARCH, SIRD and THREAD. All of these NGOs have the idea of withdrawal or role-transformation in mind. SIRD is the most extreme in this context as its only focus is now on the creation of networks and apex organisations. When these structures are consolidated, SIRD will be no more. Although by some organisations networks are being formed already from the very beginning of their intervention (for example THREAD), in others the idea came up in the course of time (for example SIRD).

Various NGOs concentrate on networking and building up apex organisations because it is an important step in the creation of awareness and in making the target groups more assertive. It is a necessity in specific operations. Without building up strong networks, not much can be done. Once the CBOs are united in an apex, they have a larger base which will give them more vocal power and vested interest groups have to take notice of them. This apex will usually be a people's movement (CCD, KTDRC, CORD, ADATS, RCDRC and ANAND NIKETAN). This has definitely a lot to do with making the groups self-reliant, but not necessarily with the idea of withdrawal of the NGO in future. In Kerala there is a formally registered Kerala Tribal Federation. The target group of

KTDRC joined this apex federation, which plays a very important role in attaining self-reliance (income-generation gets special emphasis).

A totally different kind of apex, I would like to stress, are the occasional meetings in which people from different CBOs operating in separate areas, come together and discuss. This form can also result in taking up issues together in the form of a temporary mass-movement. The importance of occasional meetings is stressed by CSR, KASSAR TRUST and AGRAGATI.

4.3.9 Representing a voice recognised by relevant outside agents

CBOs are part of broader society in which the vested interest groups are still very powerful because of their political power, linkages with the police and bureaucrats, having at their disposal financial means and a strong internal organisation. To resist, counter-forces in society need power, either by their numbers or by effective organisation combined with vocal power. According to AGRAGATI, empowerment needs a 'critical mass' in a specific area. This should give people the opportunity to offer resistance. AGRAGATI tries to co-operate actively with other NGOs and stimulate a spread effect in the villages in their working area, to other non-organised villages. Also non-organised villages participate in the anti-dowry campaign in district level.

Only a few CBOs are capable enough to defend their own interest vis-à-vis others independently from the NGO. The Coolie Organisation of ADATS succeeded in getting equal wages for both males and females and increasing the wages. The landlords in that specific area have to take the movement into account; it is a local power-block. Most of the times the defense of interests is focused on the government. Especially the tribal movements are very effective when they fight for their rights. BKS (the CBO of CORD) won several concessions from the government, the CBOs of KTDRC claimed own land and are getting legal protection nowadays. In the overall village development in the working area of SCHR, the villagers claimed afforestation projects from the government and they got these. The same happened with getting a buss-connection to particular villages. The CBOs themselves managed this whole affair. The CBOs of CINI are very independent in getting the necessary village health facilities via the government. These are just a few examples of ways in which people defend their interests and bargain with the government. AGRAGATI works also with groups which are capable to defend their own interests. When I will describe a self-reliant CBO of this organisation under the headline: CBOs' success in SR, some of these aspects will be included.

The importance of the **panchayat raj** elections needs some attention at this point. The attention of the NGOs is going more and more towards the possibility of participating in local elections. This is a very important development because a possibility has been created for looking better after the people's interests. However, the general functioning of the **panchayat** needs to be improved. In the three-tier system of self-governance of the village, block and district levels there is a statutory provision where persons from deprived communities and women get represented. Government plans are available to those elected at the village level. As some of the elected members are political party workers, information is consciously not communicated to others. In this way, many are deprived of particular programmes and projects. As a result, these are not executed in their areas. Some NGOs (CCD, AGRAGATI, CRDS, THREAD, SEARCH) focus on collecting information and orient the people so that they may know about all such plans for their area planning. A lot has to be changed before a democratic system will be functioning. This process will be accelerated when targetgroups are stimulated to participate in the elections. What the role can be of the **panchayat** with reference to the implementation of programmes at present executed by NGOs, is also a field which needs more clarity.

In the evaluation report of CECOEDECON (1996), for example, the following has been questioned:

"What are the implications of the **panchayat** and **taluk raj** for the programme, can responsibilities be handed over to these institutions and can it contribute financially to the programme?"

In the different states of India, the level of functioning of the **panchyats** differs a lot. In West-Bengal it has always been a quite well-organised institution, while in Bihar for example the **panchayat** elections are not even taking place. The possibilities, also regarding self-reliance of CBOs, is closely related to the state of affairs in this governmental body. The importance of promoting this element will be clear.

4.3.10 Capacity to handle external connection and pressures

The above written information gives some insight into the capacity of CBOs to handle external connections and pressures as well. In the files, most of the information regarding this topic was given about the NGOs and not about the CBOs. KASSAR TRUST considers the economic programme as an operation aimed at building economic self-reliance at the village level by, among other things, increasing the local bargaining power against external vested interests. Different NGOs are working on improving this power of the CBOs, but not many concrete examples apart from the above mentioned can be included here.

4.3.11 Views and strategies in relation to promotion of SR

From the review above of SR's ten more general and generic elements, we will now pass on to a review of the dynamics of SR as identified in the SR checklist: look at views and strategies to promote SR among CBOs, discuss operational practices and end with a brief examination of the files with regard to information on 'successful' SR at CBO level.

Firstly, I will describe the findings with reference to the weight attached to SR as an objective and the views and strategies to promote SR. After this some attention will be given to the factors (+/-) that influence growth towards SR. In this context some data of CBOs will be included.

In order to make the data more accessible, a sort of classification is needed. It is not an easy task to organise the diversity of data found on this matter. The following division should throw some light on the contents of the files:

- (I) NGOs that have as the main objective of their intervention making the CBOs self-reliant in future:
 - a. NGOs having a very general idea without clear steps in that direction (28,1%)
 - b. NGOs focussing on the process of withdrawal, after working for a long time towards SR of the CBOs (9,4%)
- (II) NGOs that work with an intervention strategy sub-divided in phases, where self-reliance is a well-defined phase in the process (34,3%)
- (III) NGOs that focus on developing one sector in a village and make this sector self-reliant (9,4%)
- (IV) NGOs that do not pay attention to withdrawal from their area of operation, which does not imply that they do not consider self-reliance at all (18,8%).

ad (I.a): In this first category most of the organisations are either still operating in a sort of initial phase ("*the beginning is there*", "*succeeded in identifying and reaching out to the target groups*" etc.), or do not have a structural, well-defined idea about how to reach the final stage of self-reliance. In both cases, more time is needed to work out the strategy. The variety in maturity of the CBOs is great. In the former group, two NGOs are included which work with difficult target groups: both women groups living in extremely 'conservative' areas where a lot has to be done before the structural constraints counteracting women's development will be overcome (CSR, ADITHI). The specific area of operation is an important factor in the context of promoting self-reliance of the CBOs. In the case of ADITHI, attention has to focus on economic empowerment, before any other activity, like making women more assertive, will have success; as this is the only way to increase the status of the women and give them vocal power. Only when they have their own land and

income, will they be taken more seriously by husbands, panchayat raj etc. There is a need to get them out of the contemporary social structure, which will take a very long time.

ad (Ib): The NGOs in this category will be discussed individually as each has some important characteristics: the gandhian NGO ASSEFA, AGRAGATI and SIRD. All three are working for a long time in the NGO field, have been building up strong CBOs in the village, covering different sub-groups/sectors and are now focussing on withdrawal. In case of ASSEFA questions from ICCO's side have contributed to the fact that ASSEFA is working on elaborating its withdrawal strategy (among others things, via the formulation of indicators a village has to meet to be considered as self-reliant and to make programmes sustainable through distinct self-sufficient units). It has provided a very interesting report, parts of which are taken up in the appendix.

AGRAGATI has already withdrawn from 12 villages. Phasing out means actually that the contact between the NGO and the village communities becomes less intensive, that the volunteers of AGRAGATI get no compensation any longer and that the staff members are moving towards other areas, as has happened recently in Orissa. Interesting in this case is that several CBOs initiated the idea that AGRAGATI should phase-out: "You go and work somewhere else, we can manage ourselves". This is the only NGO that I have discovered, which was pushed by their own CBOs. Most of the time, the CBOs feels the need to have close contact with the NGO as a kind of mother.

As far as SIRD is concerned, the withdrawal is related to a dominant feeling among the NGO-staff that they have worked long enough in this NGO-sector. The last phase is focused on building up networks of sanghams, both horizontal (between different sectors in the village) and vertical (up to higher levels for co-operation of a sector).

ad (II): Most of these NGO work with a variety of CBOs that can be found in different stages of maturity regarding self-reliance. The NGOs working with an intervention cycle, which has already born fruits in the sense of creating independent CBOs, are most interesting in the context of this study. The most advanced are ADATS, CRD and Thread. CRD and Thread focus mainly on awareness-building and organisation forming. For CRD an autonomous village does not necessarily mean that it is economically self-sufficient, though regarding decision-making and implementation and in searching available resources, this village is already self-reliant. ADATS does include some economic programmes in its intervention as well, however, as noted earlier, the friction is the balance between awareness raising and economics.

The way in which THREAD/WIDE deals with the concept of self-reliance, is the most exceptional and challenging strategy that has been discovered in the files. In its approach:

"the emphasis is on the first 5-6 months, in which a local project co-ordinator has been selected and trained, the **sangha** is vested and registered. After this the forming of the block level organisation and the district level federation takes place and the direct intervention will stop at this point. Only training will be given on requests from the **sanghams**. It seems possible to transform, via a very specific training method (incl. a practical course in older **sanghams**), timid oppressed tribal women into assertive, self-aware women with incredible leadership-qualities. Income-generation programmes are given in the form of training on request as well".

If this strategy is compared with the conventional integrated rural development projects, a great difference is discovered, especially in the duration of the intervention, which is important to reflect upon in the context of this programme-evaluation. Another NGO that is striking because of the short period of its intervention, is SPWD which supports local groups which implement programmes in the area of sustainable agriculture. Activities consist primarily of a contribution to one-time investments. Evaluation and monitoring takes place after a year and then it is decided whether support will be given for another year. The ICCO staff mentioned both positive and negative project results. Due to the national character of the NGO the number of CBOs is large and no general information was available about their functioning, only cases which probably show the 'model-interventions'. Still the strategy is interesting as a possibly effective one.

ad(III): In the category of the NGOs focusing on one sector in the village, it should be noted that these do influence the overall development in the village. When people are organised around the issue of Village Health Care it actually means that they must go beyond the traditional boundaries of medicine to get at the real determinants of the health status of a community (incl. caste differences, gender, poverty in various fields). Both NGOs focussing on Primarily Health Care show

a high score on self-reliance, though differentiation should be made between self-sufficiency of basic health-care (CINI and SCHR) and self-reliance concerning development activities in general, that means: the people are able to determine their own development programmes, claims and priorities (SCHR).

NGOs which concentrate only on irrigation or forestry, for example, can organise beneficiaries, train them in this particular field, make sure that the CBOs are strong enough to approach government and banks to get available resources for their programme and then withdraw. These groups have become self-reliant, but what does this mean for the village as a whole? Its situation can definitely be improved or be hardly influenced. Another NGO in this category (DASTKAR) needs some special attention because of its unique character and intervention strategy:

"The different groups show the gradual shift to self-sustainability and independence in all aspects of organisation, production and marketing as DASTKAR supports and inputs are gradually replaced internally by the groups themselves. The design, sampling and production process would also be a process of training, awareness building, and group formation, in villages split by religion, caste, and occupation. Income-generation, especially when subsidised and artificially injected from outside, is not by itself a synonym for development; but if used skillfully can be the key and catalyst to development's many other aspects: independence, education, community building and the discarding of social prejudices, women's emancipation; in short, the revitalisation, both economic and social, of splintered and marginalized local communities (Dastkar in Ranthambhore: Revitalisation of a community through craft)"

ad (IV): There are NGOs that do not think about withdrawal from a particular area. This does not imply per definition that they do not think of self-reliance of the target groups. ACTION FRATERNA/RDT sees itself as:

"a permanent and integral part of the dynamic society of Anantapur, along with other institutions like the government, business, CBOs, political parties and other NGOs. According to them there is always a need of NGOs which balance the different powers in society, in favour of the poor and the environment in the area. Development is considered as a continuous dynamic process, there will be a permanent space for 'voluntary' action that deals with the changing needs. Activities/sectors have a course of life, that can be divided into phases of initiation, actualisation, consolidation and follow-up. The latter does not mean that the activities stop, but that a new cycle starts at another level. Sustainable development means the consolidation of the impact of an activity and not of the activity itself. After the attention of sectoral development in the seventies (incl. community organisation, health, education and saving and credit grants), area development till mid eighties and environmental regeneration-annex-employment generation from 1986 onwards, AF/RDT sees for itself a role in future of improving the 'accountability' of the government, promoting gender equality, managing the environment, stimulating non-agricultural employment, family-planning, AIDS-prevention and improving the position of landless".

To get an impression of the way in which this NGO is concentrating on self-reliance of the CBO, an earlier mentioned quotation under 'capability to mobilise both internal and external resources' can be read:

"TSRD in Rangbelia is an interesting case as the local people motivated by the primary school teacher started the activities in Rangbelia area and as it is the local staff will not leave their home-villages". Regarding self-reliance: "as far as possible, within the modern day context, an attempt is made to rely on local resources/locally produced goods and reduce dependency on the market economy, even avoiding selling in the market".

Another NGO in this category is SEVA MANDIR. The focus is on sustainable agriculture, which implies a lot of investments and a long period of intervention of the NGO. Nevertheless, the strengthening of the CBOs could be emphasised much more in order to hand-over more responsibilities in the process and transform (i.e. decrease) its own role. Questions from ICCO's side are related to this lack of attention. YCO reports about a kind of strategy regarding self-reliance of CBOs; however, according to ICCO staff, the reality shows another picture. YCO even creates a dependency in its intervention with the CBOs:

"For the group (block) plantation work a bipartite agreement of 15 years, for the community plantation work a tripartite agreement of 15 years, and for the share cropping a bipartite agreement up to the casurina harvesting period are concluded. What does such a long term agreement imply for the perspective of self-reliance of the communities involved, or in other words, whether and how YCO wants to hand over responsibilities and power to the community organisations and withdraw itself?"

VVD is in a state of self-reflection at the moment. This means that their perception of self-reliance is changing and not yet clear. Most probably the process will result in a lot of attention towards self-reliance of CBOs in future interventions (VVD). Interesting to note down is that:

"in order to increase the mutual accountability between VVD and the village organisations, a start has been made to carry out PRA-exercises in each community and to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding in which the responsibilities of both VVD and the community are described. This overall planning may also contribute to a better integration of the various programmes and to a more clear cut strategy to make communities self-reliant" (Travel report).

4.3.12.1 Operational practices with regard to (promotion of) SR

In approximately seventeen KID-BEMOs, I found question from ICCO's side regarding the way the NGOs are dealing with issues like strengthening the CBOs in order to make them more self-reliant, the long-term perspective including the view of NGOs on final withdrawal or role-transformation, and so on. It is definitely a matter of great concern. Also in the follow-up of travel reports the need of attention for role-transformation and the perspective on the period after the contemporary project period is emphasised. However, I did not discover a lively debate between ICCO and partners about these issues in the correspondence. In a recent letter (20-02-1997) to AGRAGATI, the following was found:

"A matter that is of great interest to us is the state of affairs with regard to the phasing out of several villages. We would like to hear some more about the current situation in the 12 villages that have already been phased out (...). We noted that they are included in the list of funds mobilised, which is a clear indication that the committees are still active. We would also be very interested to hear more about the villages to be phased out during the current period".

It has become clear that it is a factor of interest for ICCO; the following quotation is another proof of this:

"(...) A recommendation has been made to study the effect of the credit programme....as providing credit develops dependency and a receiving attitude among **sangham** members. For ICCO, this is an area of wider concern, not limited to SIRD only, as it linked to the core of our work; promotion of self reliance" (Progress memo SIRD).

The attention for self-reliance is actually reflected nowhere in operational practices. Ideas about group discussions are plenty and an important workshop on SR will be organised in future. Yet concrete initiatives have, in as far as I know, not yet been undertaken.

4.3.12.2 Views of Community Based Organisations on self-reliance

My general impression is that the concept of self-reliance is rarely brought under the attention of CBOs. Several times it was mentioned that the CBOs are focussed on immediate need satisfaction instead of self-reliance in the long run and sustainability. This has a lot to do with the particular intervention strategy of the NGO; delivery of services and goods in the initial phase is contributing a lot to this 'receiving' attitude. However, when the focus is on making the targetgroups aware of their own capacities of mobilising resources, an independent attitude is promoted.

Quote in workshop self-reliance: 'we did not ask for, once they are here they cannot leave us alone'"

NGOs which stress a division of responsibilities and make this clear from the beginning, most probably communicate with the CBOs about self-reliance. It is not clear how far this is a matter of exchanging ideas; a top-down approach in which the NGOs determine this process is equally possible. However, when the CBOs are informed right from the beginning that the NGO's intervention is temporary and that they themselves are responsible for continuation of the project activities once the NGO withdraws, the idea of self-reliance does not come as a surprise. An effective strategy to make the CBOs aware of this process is to point out a role-division and divide the responsibilities, like CASA is doing:

"To handle the problems the roles of CASA and CBOs are strictly separated: CASA gives advice, suggestions, support and guidance; the CBOs are responsible for the process of group formation, the improvement of living standards, the protection of the environment, the stimulation of economic development, the improvement of education and health facilities, skill training, increasing of awareness, betterment of position of women, improvement of sanitary situation in the villages and the organisation of meetings" (KID-BEMO CASA).

In reality, the picture is slightly different but striving towards a role-division is at least a positive development. CINI formalises this role-division by signing a contract in which the responsibilities of both NGO and CBOs are pointed out. VVD is developing this system as well. About half of the NGOs think about role-transformation; some integrated this factor right from the beginning of their intervention, others develop the transformation in course of the period of operation. It is difficult for NGOs to decide on what should be their actual role: a provider or delivery system for goods or more an agent for promotion and facilitator so that the people themselves may find access to the state and possibly other delivery systems (evaluation CECOEDECON). The women groups of CSR are also more interested in handing over lists of things and jobs which they can get out of CSR. It is a long process to make the groups aware of the fact that if they want something they have to work for it themselves.

Concrete examples of how the CBOs think of the idea of becoming self-reliant and the withdrawal of the NGO have been discovered only in the file of DEEPALYA:

"Only a handful of EC members and beneficiaries mentioned that the **samitis** will take over once DPP withdraws & the programme will be handed over to the community. In general the beneficiaries do not welcome the withdrawal of DPP. People do not understand why DPP wants to withdraw completely, the **samitis** should not be left alone. **Samiti** EC members welcome independence but not withdrawal".

In order to know what people in villages are thinking and to get a better understanding of their needs, VVD started real communication with the targetgroups. I discovered a very interesting discussion about how villagers interpret 'development'; it is an example of how self-reliance is reflected in their minds:

"It was our assumption that the term development may be foreign to the villagers. However, when we facilitated the process we found that people have their own understanding at their level on development. They understood development as society where self-reliance, fraternity, having concern for each other prevails. With our facilitation people had better understanding about development which focused on physical, spiritual and mental development" (Narrative report, '96)

4.3.12.3 Concrete interventions to promote self-reliance

THREAD is an NGO that gives training in the strategy of withdrawal for other NGOs. The effects of training is not noted in the file. It is interesting that the possibility has been discussed during a recent visit of an ICCO staffmember that a workshop for the ICCO staff on this issue could be organised in co-operation with THREAD. In the file of AGRAGATI, a particular paragraph of a travel report gives some interesting information in this context:

"AGRAGATI is interested in sharing own experiences with other NGOs. As an example the policy of phasing out came to the fore. I declared that ICCO is, in principle, prepared to facilitate the process of exchanging ideas between different NGOs, whether on regional level, or more issue-based".

Under this headline I would like to mention the various ideas the ICCO staff has about withdrawal from particular areas before the NGO can start working in a new area. For some NGOs this is stated as a condition, while other NGOs do not have to take this into consideration as no question from ICCO's side has been formulated.

4.3.13 Actual withdrawal of NGOs from CBOs

Actual withdrawal from CBOs is taking place in the area of operation of ASSEFA, CCD (mainly financially), CINI, SCHRP, AGRAGATI, DASTKAR, SPWD, ADATS, KTDRC, CRD, SIRD and THREAD. SPWD and DASTKAR have both a very specific intervention strategy of which it is known that self-reliant CBOs are created, despite the fact that I personally do not have concrete knowledge about these CBOs. Most of these NGOs have been described before. About KTDRC I would like to explain something more. They use a very interesting intervention strategy which can be summarised as 'stop and go', depending on available financial support. The movement is permanently active and is extended with various projects, whenever money is available. At a certain level, the CBOs are self-reliant. The best insight in autonomously operating CBOs has been obtained from AGRAGATI's files (see the examples in annex)

4.4 An attempt to identify patterns amongst NGOs in relation to their views and practices of SR

Taking the 13 elements from the SR-checklist, by how many NGOs were these referred to in the ICCO files? Maybe, these preliminary data can help draw a first profile of what the NGOs--and possibly ICCO--were concerned with in this area.

Element	No. NGOs
Autonomous organisation	32
Views & strategy to promote SR	28
Awareness of own potential	23
Mobilising int'l & ext'l resources	22
Assertiveness in outside world	20
Capacity plan, monitor & evaluate	19
Linkage to apex organisation	18
Accumulation of assets	17
Voice recognised by external agents	13
Success in self-reliance	9
Capacity handle ext'l relations	3

Clearly, with regard to SR the single most important concern of NGOs was the promotion of autonomous CBOs, for them a basic requisite for SR. Their own overall concept and strategies of SR come next: it does form an issue for them. A next group of SR elements drawing attention has to do with promoting CBOs' awareness and actual mobilisation of their own potential, both materially, socially and politically. It is a bit surprising that apparently the NGOs' concern with the 'external dimension'--other than assertiveness--ranks less high; it looks as if NGOs considered them less crucial for SR than the CBOs' own, internal strength and assets.

4.5 Conclusions

In this section I return to the research questions guiding the different research activities of this programme evaluation. In so far as possible, I will attempt to formulate my conclusions in terms of answers to these questions, on the basis of the information gathered from the 32 files.

Both ICCO and most of the NGOs have a general **concept** of self-reliance. For ICCO, self-reliance is a very general concept, important to reach but without clear elements and indicators for monitoring and evaluation to see whether the final stage will be reached. Concerning the NGOs, their concept varies from a very general to a more operational concept. Each and every NGOs has its own strategy to make CBOs more self-reliant. Most of them have a notion of '**growth** towards self-reliance'. Some work with **stages** the target groups have to go through, while others think in

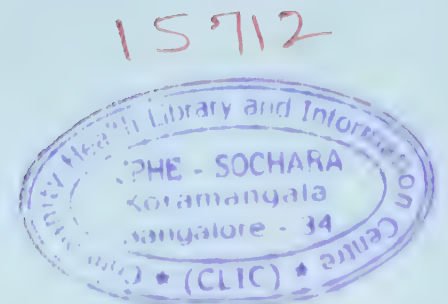
terms of a particular number of years to make the CBOs self-reliant, without a clear vision in advance.

More information is available about the **factors** which influence the failure of efforts to promote self-reliance than about the successes. CRD gives a lot of insight in the hindrances in the process and it gives a good idea of what can possibly happen:

"the perpetual struggles of the communities (...) have been hindered by both the nature and the man at various stages: change of policy in financial year; transfer of project director; process of rural permanent housing has been slowed down due to the delay and short supply of cement. The process has been further affected by the inadequate water supply among the communities; delay of mid term evaluation and transfer of finances; inability of communities to meet the schedules of the government; 38 houses gutted in torrential rains creating havoc among the communities, the cyclone havoc, though created some initial disappointment and distress among the communities; attempts of communities to claim the insurance of their deceased animals have been hampered; fire accidents etc."

Discussions about self-reliance are not very intensive nor systematic. They are more intensive with some NGOs than with others, especially with those already working on SR. Although self-reliance can be a joint and agreed objective of **policy**, such a policy does not exist nor a real and systematic exchange of ideas and experiences. In the case of ASSEFA, questions from ICCO's side have contributed to the development of indicators of a self-reliant CBO from which the NGO can withdraw. But no concrete **agreements** or commitments have been made. As noted, some NGOs do make agreements with CBOs about length of stay and growth towards SR.

The strengthening of the **panchayat raj** institutions through **decentralisation** has been capitalised to promote the self-reliance of CBOs only to a limited extent due to the differences between the states in India in this respect.



CHAPTER 5 NGO PARTNERS AND SELF-RELIANCE

5.1 Introduction

Community development, as an official policy, is a major concern in India since the First Five year plan. This governmental concern has been further supplemented by the activities of other actors. Incidentally the other actors emerged not only to fulfill the supplementary role but also as an alternative to the Government failures. However, even after 50 years of independence and with plethora of actors playing the constructive role the plight of the communities is still deplorable. Far from being Self Reliant, communities seem to be becoming more dependent and vulnerable to external and internal forces. This condition has forced all concerned partners to question the validity of the traditional development concepts and approaches. The present study is one such attempt to question and demystify the concept of Self Reliance often used as a criteria to judge the success or failure of development programmes. The rationale is that better understanding of this complex issue will help in policy making and developing better strategies.

Self Reliance of the People is a "ultimate objective " enshrined by all the development actors. However it is a fuzzy concept with no consensus on its definition and approaches. So far few efforts have been made to understand this concept and measure it, as an achievable goal. Therefore the claims of developing Self Reliant communities is seen with skepticism. This is especially true for the NGOs which have been advocating this concept and practising it in the field. The present study will therefore try to understand the concept and practice of Self Reliance from the NGO perspective. Specifically the study will try to understand :

- whether the NGOs have and apply general and operational concept of Self Reliance along with its definition , elements and indicators.
- whether NGOs have a dynamic notion of Self Reliance as characterised by the possibilities of stages through which the people have to pass before reaching Self Reliance.
- whether the NGOs have specific policies and intervention strategies to promote Self reliance. Efforts will also be made to document their experience and understand the factors determining the development of Self Reliant communities.
- whether the NGOs jointly discuss and collaborate with its partners like the donor agency and the communities in matters relating to Self Reliance issues.
- how NGOs are reacting to the present reforms, decentralisation and also liberalisation, in India and whether they are capitalising, specially the decentralisation efforts, to promote Self Reliance amongst the communities with whom they are working.

The study is based on questionnaire survey. 86 ICCO partners in different regions of India was administered the questionnaire through mail. However only 55 per cent of the NGOs responded. The response rate was over 60 per cent in South and East but was below 50 percent in West and North. Some NGOs also failed to respond due to postal problems. Majority of NGOs are involved in integrated rural development programmes. There are very few urban NGOs. Desegregation and comparison of information is done mostly at the regional level. Simple frequency distribution has been used for this purpose. The open ended questions have been structured and tabulated using the elements of self reliance. The elements were predefined and subsequently modified based on the responses of the NGOs. The frequencies show the importance attached to the elements. Weighted rank scores have also been computed in order to understand the priorities and importance of responses. Besides poor response the other major limitation of the study has been lack of clarity in filling up the questionnaire.

Table 1: Sample Distribution (Number of NGOs)

Categories	East (Bihar, W. Bengal, Orissa, North East)	North (UP, Delhi, MP)	South (AP, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala)	West (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra)	Total
Questionnaire Sent	21	22	29	14	86
Questionnaire Received	13	10	19	6	48
Response Rate	61.9	45.4	65.5	42.8	55.8

5.2 NGO Profile

The 48 NGOs are spread across different geographical locations. There is also considerable degree of variation amongst the NGOs with respect to their age, size, funding requirement, ideology and programmes. The table below indicates some of the characteristics of the NGOs. ICCO has been funding NGOs in India since last 18 year. But there are a few which they have taken up since last one year only. Besides ICCO, most NGOs also mobilise resources from other agencies. The internal sources are the various State and Central Government Departments and other funding organisations like the Help Age India, Family Planning Association of India, Banks and Private Trusts. The external funding agencies include Ford Foundation, SIDA, OXFAM, GTZ, Help Age International, IGSS, Action Aid, Bread of the world, Plan International, Christian Aid, Misereor and CIDA

Table 2: NGO Characteristics

Elements	Average					Minimum					Maximum				
	E	N	S	W	Total	E	N	S	W	Total	E	N	S	W	Total
Age (Years)	15	13	18	17	16	9	5	2	9	2	28	27	67	29	67
Manpower (Years)															
- Managerial	11	11	9	17	11	7	2	1	2	1	24	50	60	40	60
- Technical	24	37	12	22	22	3	3	0	0	0	79	110	86	44	110
- Field	176	77	355	60	212	14	6	3	4	3	1352	385	5630	157	5630
- Others	0	0	0	117	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	702	702
- Total	211	130	375	99	245	31	14	9	6	6	1422	419	5700	228	5700
ICCO Funding Years	7	7	10	11	9	2	1	1	7	1	18	14	17	17	17

In terms of political ideology most of the NGOs can be termed as neutral. Though there are some Gandhian and left oriented organisations as well. The Gandhians do have their notion of Self Reliance as conceived in concept like "gram swaraj". Some of them are the oldest organisations involved in community development work. Asset building, land ownership economic development are some issues which they emphasize. They also work in close collaboration with the government agencies. Some of the neutrals are in fact the offshoots of the Gandhians. The left organisations have roots in the turbulent (late) sixties and early seventies. This was the period when disenchantment with the mixed economy and the state was intense. The left organisations emphasize conscientization and empowerment strategies in their development programmes. During the eighties the intensity of the left has decreased and they follow more compromising attitude

towards state initiated programmes. The neutrals are the result of the proffessionalisation of the voluntary sector. In part they are also the consequence of failed Gandhian and left development initiative. In terms of numbers they are the largest. They follow both the empowerment and access strategies encompassing in part the ideologies of both the Gandhian and left organisations. There are few church based organisations mostly in South and North India. However their activity is not confined to their religious denomination. The approach of church based organisations has considerably changed from being charitable to more developmental

Table 3: Relationship with Church (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	All
Related	1	4	4	1	10
Not Related	12	6	15	5	38
All	13	10	19	6	48

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Majority of the organisation have multiple programmes, diversified target groups and cover large area. Most have integrated development programme covering different sectors like agriculture, environment, forestry, animal husbandry, education, health, household industries, fisheries, shelter and other basic services, technology and finance. The programmes mostly address the needs of the rural and urban marginal groups with emphasis on women, tribals, scheduled caste and backward caste, children, youth, disabled, agricultural labourers, marginal farmers and artisans. The groups for programme implementation is organised on the basis of gender, age, community (rural, urban, SC, ST etc), occupation and sectors.

5.3 Self Reliance Concept

Self Reliance of the target group is an issue which practically all NGOs are trying to address in their community development efforts. Therefore it is specifically included as a part of their general and programme specific objectives. This is indicated in the following table. However there are quite some organisations which do not consider it as a part of their specific objective even though they are concerned about it. The reason being these organisations are not working directly in the field with the people. Some of them are educational and some support organisations. Therefore they feel that Self Reliance of the people is not their major agenda. Some have indicated that Self Reliance is inherent in all developmental activities but difficult to measure and specify.

Table 4: Self Reliance as General and Specific Objectives (number of NGOs)

Objectives		East	North	South	West	Total
General	Yes	12	9	16	5	42 (87.5)
	No	1	1	3	1	6 (12.5)
	No Response	0		0		0.0
	All	13	10	19	6	48 (100.0)
Specific	Yes	8	4	11	4	27 (56.2)
	No	1	1	2		4 (8.3)
	No Response	4	5	6	2	16 (33.3)
	All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Self Reliance as defined by the NGOs encompasses a varied (*Table 5*) and large number of elements. Variation could be because of the diversity of the context in which the NGOs operate like geography, socio-cultural attributes of the target groups, politico-economic situation and the institutional structures. Nature of the NGOs, ideology, period of association with the community and their experiences in the given context are also important determinants. However, some common elements like self management and decision making, organisation and performance, and planning monitoring and evaluation capabilities, been identified as the important attributes of a Self Reliant community by majority of the NGOs in all the regions. The above elements have also been considered important by both the urban and the rural NGOs (*Appendix 1*). This means that a self reliant community has the power to decide their developmental activities for themselves, are empowered to bargain for and demand their rights vis a vis other institutional structures like the state through their own institutional structure like the traditional village institutions. Decentralisation and devolution of power to the peoples institution is important. Interestingly, the importance of the statutory Panchayati Raj Institutions hardly finds mention as peoples institution in the definitions. A self reliant community should also have the capacity to plan monitor and evaluate the developmental activities. This implies high levels of skills and education amongst the population. Therefore quality of human resources have also been highlighted as an attribute of a self reliant community by many NGOs. Psychological attributes like self confidence and dignity of the community in their interaction with other communities and other actors like the Government are also important. Economic security is not considered as important as management and institutional aspects. No NGOs or only very few have also highlighted the inculcation of democratic and egalitarian values amongst the community members as important condition for achieving Self Reliance. On the other hand none of the NGOs, in their definition, have explicitly considered identities -locational, or otherwise, and networking abilities as important elements for achieving Self Reliance of the communities, even though the work of many NGOs are specifically related to these aspects.

All NGOs have defined Self Reliance in the context of a group-community, occupation, village-and not in the context of individuals. Achievement and sustenance of Self Reliance is a collective process. There is also considerable degree of similarity amongst the NGOs in urban and rural areas in different regions regarding the definition of Self Reliance. This should help evolve a common acceptable definition from policy perspective, which could be adapted to local context with minor changes. However commonality of elements need not necessarily imply common strategies. On the whole the definitions provides a holistic perspective encompassing various elements. Economic development is not a sufficient condition for a community to be Self Reliant as commonly assumed. There are other conditions to be met. The increase in the number of elements, however posses a problem in terms of translating these concepts into achievable actions unless supplemented by proper planning, appropriate strategies and integration of programmes. This to a large extent will determine the success of NGOs in evolving Self Reliant communities.

5.4 Operational Practices Programmes and Strategies

Self Reliance of the target group is a matter of concern amongst the NGOs in all regions (*Table 6*). This is true even in case of those NGOs who have not explicitly mentioned it as their specific objective.

Table 6: Concern for Self Reliance (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Very Much	9	8	14	3	34 (70. 8)
Much	4	2	4	2	12 (25. 0)
More or Less		0		1	1 (16. 7)
No Response			1	0. 0	1 (2. 1)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Some of the NGOs have been concerned with the issue of Self Reliance very recently (*Table 7*). Many of them could be the new NGOs. But there are older NGOs trying to address the issue for over 20 years. In fact many of the old Gandhian NGOs work on the principals of Gram Swaraj, which effectively means Self Reliance. On the whole the average years of concern ranges from 10 years amongst the Eastern and Southern NGOs to 9 years in the North and 7 in the West. The concern with Self Reliance of the communities in the last 10 to 15 years also indicates the changes in the approaches of the NGOs regarding community development issues during this period. It was basically the realisation of the fact that NGOs were creating more dependent communities by their paternalistic top down approaches and therefore a need was felt to make development process more participatory with more active role of the community. NGOs role was seen as a facilitator and catalyst like other actors in the field. Therefore the concern for Self Reliance during this period can be seen as a natural culmination of the rethinking amongst the NGOs during that period.

Table 7 Period of Concern (number of NGOs)

Years	East	North	South	West	Total
< 2 Yrs	1		1	2	4 (8. 3)
2-5 Yrs	3	3	3	1	10 (20. 8)
5-10 Yrs	3	1	5	1	10 (20. 8)
10-15 Yrs	3	5	3	1	12 (25. 0)
15-20 Yrs	2		5	1	8 (16. 7)
20 Yrs +	1		1		2 (4. 2)
No Response		1	1		2 (4. 2)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)
Average Yrs	10	9	10	7	9
Maximum Yrs	22	15	20	20	22
Minimum Yrs	2	1	1	1	1

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

The concern (*Table 8*) has emanated mostly from the NGOs. Diversification and expansion into wider areas and the need to work with newer communities are the principal factors. Self reliant communities are less dependent on the NGOs and sometimes may even facilitate the out reach plan by taking up important responsibilities of the NGOs. Some NGOs have also indicated that the communities have been responsible for making them concerned about the issue. This probably could be the communities with higher levels of political awareness, exposure and organisation. The role of the Donor agencies seems to be marginal. Non of the NGOs have exclusively indicated that their concern for self reliance is at the behest of the Donors.

NGOs also indicated (*Table 9*) that Self Reliance as an issue is a part of their agenda for discussion with their target groups during their work. It is regularly discussed amongst the NGOs in the South as compared to NGOs in other region. There are very few NGOs, who have formal agreement, at the beginning of the project cycle, with their target groups regarding Self Reliance. It is also interesting to note that the percentage of NGOs having formal agreement with the target groups is high amongst the Southern NGOs. No NGOs from the West indicated having any formal agreement regarding Self Reliance with their counterparts. Many NGOs also indicated joint monitoring and evaluation mechanism with the people. However how systematic and effective are these mechanism is an important consideration and can be understood only by studying them in the field. Absence of a formal agreement regarding Self Reliance seems to be the weakness amongst majority of the NGOs. In absence of such agreements the time frames , for withdrawal and the monitoring and evaluation mechanism itself becomes weak. The formal agreements, in the beginning itself should clearly spell out the operational mechanism including the stages, time frames and PMES. If these things are known to the people and NGOs from the beginning both will be prepared to take over the changed role relationship more effectively. Dependency syndrome as observed in

Table 8: Reasons for Concern (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Demand of Target Group	1	2	2		5 (10. 4)
Donors Insistence					0. 0
NGO's Concern: With Increasing Outreach	5	4	6	3	18(37. 5)
NGO's Own Concern: End of Previous Project Cycle		1	1		2(4. 1)
NGO's Own Concern: Learned from Other NGOs					0. 0
NGO's Own Concern: Implication of Government Contract					0. 0
Target Group Demand NGO's Own Concern with Increasing Out Reach	1		2	1	4(8. 3)
NGO's own Concern: due to Increasing outreach and Implication of Government contract	1				1(2. 08)
Donors Insistence, NGO's Own Concern with Increasing Out reach & Implication of Government Contract	2		1		3(6. 25)
No Response	3	3	7	2	15(31. 2)
All	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

the field, amongst the people may considerably reduce if they are aware that the NGOs role is going to reduce in the future . Such a strategy may even motivate the people to demand more from the NGOs. On the other hand NGOs may overcome their "Territorial Syndrome" of owning communities in perpetuity making them more effective as a catalyst

Table 9: Discussion with Target Groups regarding Self Reliance (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
No Discussion			0		0. 0
Occasional	1		1	1	3 (6. 3)
Regular Discussion		2	6	1	9 (18. 8)
Formal Agreement			2		2 (4. 2)
Monitored & Evaluated by NGO	2				2 (4. 2)
Monitored & Evaluated Jointly	2	3	1	3	9 (18. 8)
Regular Discussion, Joint Evaluation	4	1	5	1	11 (22. 9)
Regular Discussion, Evaluation NGO, Sometimes Joint	2	3	1		6 (12. 6)
Regular Discussion, Formal, Evaluation NGO, Sometimes Joint	2	1	3		6 (12. 6)
T o t a l	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

In all regions (*Table 10*) the initiatives in raising and discussing self reliance issues is mostly taken by the NGOs more so amongst the Southern NGOs. However the target groups along with the NGOs also appear to be playing important role as compared to the Donor agencies. The joint initiative of the Donor agency and the NGOs is important in the South.

Table 10: Initiatives in Raising Self Reliance Issues (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
The NGO	3	7	10	3	23 (47.9)
Only Donor					0
Donor & NGO	2	1	5	1	9 (9.0)
The Target Group		1	1		2 (4.2)
NGO & Target Group	6		3	2	11 (22.9)
Donor NGO & Target Group	2				2 (4.2)
No Response		1			1 (2.1)
Total	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

75 percent of the NGOs apply (*Table 11*) indicators to measure Self Reliance. Use of indicators is high in the South and lowest in the West.

Table 5: Application of Indicators (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Apply	10	6	18	2	36 (75.0)
No Response	3	4	1	4	12 (25.0)
Total	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

61 per cent of the NGO have jointly developed (*Table 12*) the indicators with the target group. Involvement of the community in the development of the indicators is high in the case of the Northern and the Southern NGOs as compared to the others. 12 percent of the NGOs developed indicators without involving the community. Joint development of indicators could be through participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which is also indicated by the fact that many NGOs have joint discussion and evaluation system. There are no cases where the target groups have solely developed the indicators. However the indicators mentioned by the NGOs lack clarity. Indicators have often been confused with criterias and even strategies. 25 per cent NGOs, mostly in the north have not responded to this particular question, which indicates either they are not clear or they do not use the indicators.

Table 12: Development of Indicators (number of NGOs)

Regions	East	North	South	West	Total
The NGO	1	1	4		6 (12.8)
The Target Group					0.0
NGO & Target Group	10	6	14	2	31 (61.0)
No Response	1	3	1	1	6 (26.2)
Total	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

5.4.1 Self Reliance Programmes

Majority of the NGOs, specially in the East and the South, have special programmes to promote Self Reliance.

Table 13: Having Special Programmes on Self Reliance

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
With Programmes	13	8	19	4	44 (91. 7)
Without Programmes/ No Response		2		2	4 (8. 3)
T o t a l	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Some of the important programmes (*Table 14*) are human resources development, resource mobilization, institutional development along with programmes related to the improvement of management capacities like PMES. Awareness generation programmes specially related to resources is also emphasized by the NGOs. Income generation, infrastructure development and economic development including poverty eradication can be categorized as the next set of important programmes targeted to achieve Self Reliance of the people. As compared to the others the Southern NGOs give more emphasis to awareness raising and resource mobilization programmes including internal resources from the community and external resources from other institutions like the government. On the whole the nature of programmes supports the elements highlighted by the NGOs in their definition. It becomes clear that institutional building and improving peoples awareness and management capacities is important considerations in evolving Self Reliant communities. It is also to be remembered that many programmes overlap. Programme related to women encompass different component. There are some programmes which are specific to women. Many NGOs have not differentiated programmes by target groups in the questionnaire. Therefore some of the information has to be taken with caution. It can be said that the patterns and trends are indicative and certainly needs to be followed with extensive field work. Some of the specific programmes are indicated below.

Self Reliance Programmes

Categories	Components
Human Resources Development	Programmes related the development of Skill, Education, Child Development, Health etc.
Autonomous Organisation	Institution Building CBOs, Community Organisation, NGO Capacitisation,
Resource Mobilization	Community Funds, Thrifts, Linking networking with other Resource Centres,
Planning Monitoring & Evaluation including Management and Decision making	Programmes related to the development of management skills. Mostly related to institutional management, project management including capacity to plan monitor and evaluate.
Infrastructure & Economic Development	Basic Services, Shelter, Income Generation Activities, Agriculture Animal husbandry, Resource Management including CPR's, Watershed development, Appropriate technology etc.
Awareness Generation	Awareness Camps regarding Government programmes social issues, Legal Education.

5.4.2 Strategies

Strategies applied to achieve Self Reliance varies with the nature and type of NGO, the target groups and their level of organisation, programmes, geographical conditions, stage of intervention cycle and sometimes by the political economic situation. Despite this differences there are commonalities in the strategies adopted by the NGOs. Weighted ranking of the strategies (*Table 15*) indicate training related strategies as the most important. Specially the training of women and youth followed by leadership training in general. However training related to skill upgradation ranks quite low except in the case of Western and Eastern NGOs. Training of women is an important empowerment strategy followed by most NGOs and often precedes other intervention measures including economic development programmes. Western NGOs emphasize cooperative activity as an important strategy. Incidentally many of these NGOs are environmental NGOs with emphasis on community based resource management programmes specially the common property resources. Economic development programmes ranks as the third most important strategy amongst the majority of the NGOs except in the North where it ranks as the first. Programming Self Reliance from the very beginning has been ranked as the fourth important strategy. But there are regional variations and the Southern NGOs do not consider it as an important strategy, according it tenth rank. The fact that none of the NGOs rank it as the first indicates that Self Reliance is mostly an after thought and never a part of the formal agreement right at the beginning of the NGO intervention cycle. Community organisation initiative can be categorized as the next important set of strategy followed by the NGOs. These efforts are based on strengthening cooperative activity and there by strengthening peoples identity by emphasizing their past, culture, their uniqueness or even their deprivations. This is mostly observed in case of the marginal groups like the Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Agricultural Labourers and Women. Strengthening the financial base of the target groups, helping them link up with the government, promoting autonomy of the target groups in relation to the political parties and strengthening claim making and bargaining capacity are other strategies indicated by the NGOs but in general they are not considered as important as training, economic improvement or organisation development. It is also interesting to note that NGOs have accorded low priority to strategies like getting legal recognition for the target groups, developing second level organisations and transferring programmes and tasks to the target group. Incidentally these strategies along with strong financial base, linking, claim making and bargaining capacity vis a vis the government and other actors are important considerations in the process of developing self reliant communities. Many NGOs may emphasize such strategies in the later stages after the community has reached certain level of awareness, cohesiveness and economic stability. But it is important they are planned in the beginning and built into the programme intervention cycle gradually. In fact the decentralisation initiatives taken by the government makes such strategies more important for the realisation of Self reliant communities.

5.5. Achievements

Majority of the NGOs have already generated Self Reliant communities (*Table 16*) and they intend to create such communities in future. The Southern and Western NGOs appear to be more successful than the NGOs in other region. Around 16 per cent of the NGOs have not succeeded in creating Self Reliant communities but feel the need to do so in the future.

Table 16: Generation of Self Reliant Communities (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Not Yet & No Plans					0.0
Not Yet But in Future	4	3		1	8 (16.7)
Generated & Will in Future	9	7	17	5	38 (79.2)
No Response			2		2 (4.2)
Total	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

The over all achievement rates (*Table 17*) of creating Self Reliant communities by the NGOs is low and varies considerably across region. On the whole only 9 percent of the target groups have become Self Reliant. Achievement rate is highest in the South followed by North and East. Though majority of the Western NGO also indicated generation of Self Reliant communities their over all achievement rate is quite low. There are very few NGOs with a success rate of over 60 percentage. Given the period of concern and the complexities of factors involved in developing Self Reliant communities the achievement rates appear to be reasonable.

Table 17: Percentage of Target Groups Achieving Self Reliance (number of NGOs)

Percentage	East	North	South	West	Total
< 20	6	6	6	6	24 (50)
20-40	5	1	5		11 (22. 9)
40-60	2	1	6		9 (18. 8)
60-80		1	2		3 (6. 3)
80 +		1			1 (2. 1)
All	13	10	19	6	48(100)
Average	(23. 08)	(23. 5)	(35)	(4)	(9. 27)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

On an average Self Reliant communities have been developed after 10 years of working (*Table 18*) with the communities. The Western NGOs have taken longer time followed by the Southern, Eastern and Northern.

Table 18: Time Taken to Develop SR Communities (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Average Years	8	7	11	14	10
Minimum Years	2	5	2	8	2
Maximum Years	20	12	20	30	30

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

5.6 Process

Most NGOs have indicated that achieving Self Reliance is a dynamic and continuous process. Though strict compartmentalization is difficult, majority of them feel that this process can be delineated into different stages (*Table 19*) using different set of criteria's. This view appears to be common amongst majority of the Southern NGOs then others. Communities do graduate from one stage to the other in a gradual and phased manner. Phasing out of the Self Reliance process also helps formulation of strategies and programmes appropriate to the communities in different stage of evolution.

Table 19: Relevance of Stages (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Need to Pass through Stages	12	7	8	5	42 (87. 5)
Stage not Relevant	1	3	1	1	6 (12. 5)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Three major stages have been identified. But there are NGOs advocating four to five stages also, certainly indicating confusion with regards the concept of stage.

Table 20: Number of Stages (number of NGOs)

No. of Stages	East	North	South	West	Total
1		1			1 (2. 08)
2				1	1 (2. 08)
3	11	6	13	3	33 (68. 75)
4			4		4 (8. 3)
5	1		1	1	3 (6. 25)
No Response	1	3	1	1	6 (12. 5)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

There is considerable difference in categorizing and defining the stages amongst the NGOs. However the three major stages could be generalized into Formative, Consolidation and Autonomous using the criteria's (Table 21). In Formative stage groups are mostly unorganised, they lack awareness and assertiveness, lack confidence and dignity, have poor economic base, lack basic facilities, are weak in self management and decision making capacity, the status of marginal groups like women, children scheduled castes and tribes is deplorable and are in a state of dependence to the exploitative classes and institutions of the community. Democratic and egalitarian values are absent, except the tribals, and the identity related to self origins and conditions is high. Institutions are characterised by informal structures, unwritten rules and regulations. Along with poor economic base the physical asset, and technological capacity is also marginal and people have limited capacity to mobilize internal and external resources. Linkage to and participation in the apex organizations are also weak.

In the consolidation stage the communities are organised into groups either based on issues or programmes. Solidarity of the group increases with active participation of the community. Awareness leads to higher assertiveness along with the increase in economic status, skills, knowledge and dignity. Despite this the identities related to origins still exist . The networking capacity of the people is still weak with limited affiliation to the apex organisations. Dependence on the NGO is still high.

In the autonomous stage the communities have strong institutional base in some cases characterised by well defined roles and structures. Identities related to origins decreases. Economic condition consolidates along with increase in physical asset base. Financial stability of the community is characterised by strong internal resource mobilization capacity. To a large extent the communities acquire the skills and capacities to network with other institutions and the role of the apex organisations also becomes important. Under such conditions the political maturity of the community is also high.

Average time (Table 22) required to attain Self Reliance is around 14 years for all the NGOs. However there are considerable variation across the regions. The Southern NGOs indicate longer time requirement to complete the Self Reliance cycle as compared to the others. This is also true in case of the Eastern NGOs. It is also interesting to note that most NGOs mention less time requirement in the formative stages as compared to others stages. Which implies that consolidation and integration is a difficult task and takes longer time.

Table 22: Time Required to Become Self Reliant (average number of years)

Stages	East	North	South	West	All
Stage I	5	2	7	2	4
Stage II	6	3	10	2	5
Stage III	5	2	10	2	5
All	16	7	27	6	14

It is important however to note that the variation amongst the regions could be due to difficulty in conceptualizing the stages. In fact many NGOs may not be working in a stage module rendering it difficult for them to define the time frame. This get reflected when we compare the above information with the information on time taken by the NGOs to generate Self Reliant communities (Table 17). The inconsistency indicates that NGOs do lack clarity with respect to stage-wise achievement of self reliance and this is true for all NGOs except in the North, in which case the stage-wise time confirms with the time they have spent on developing Self Reliant communities.

NGOs, specially in the South and North, have also indicated (Table 23) that communities can stand on their own feet after attaining Self Reliance. Some however feel that communities do need constant reassurance from the NGOs and they have to go back to them. The percentage of such NGOs is maximum in the West.

Table 23: Stand on Their Own Feet (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Stand on Own Feet	7	5	11		23 (47. 9)
Need to Go Back	3	2	6	5	16 (33. 3)
No Response	3	3	2	1	9 (18. 8)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

For most NGOs Self Reliance does (Table 24) not mean complete withdrawal, from the communities. Majority of them maintain contact with the communities irrespective of whether the communities are able to stand own their own feet or not. However the extent of involvement in the community affair decreases, and their roles gets redefined. In a way it is at this stage the NGOs truly act as a facilitator. The NGOs mostly take over a advisory role assisting the target groups in planning, monitoring and evaluation, training, resource mobilization, liasoning and networking with the government and other resource institutions, giving technical support, documentation and information dissemination, conflict management and marketing.

Table 24: Connection Maintained with Self Reliant Communities (Number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Not Maintained	2	1	1		4 (8.3)
Maintained	11	9	18	6	44 (91. 7)
All	13	10	19	6	48(100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Achievement of Self Reliance by the older target groups have facilitated the adoption (*Table 25*) of new communities in case of 56 percent of the sample NGOs. This is mainly because of the fact that Self Reliant communities are less demanding on the NGOs. In some cases the older communities also help NGOs in their extension plan. However how many and how effective are the communities in playing such a role is still a matter of conjecture. Field experience did indicate that some communities played the role by giving information to the community regarding the activities of the NGOs and then linking them together. But there are still large number of NGOs failing to expand and diversify their activities amongst the newer communities. The size and experience of the NGOs, man power and infrastructure availability are some important factors determining such extension plans. Besides this, resource constraints is often the most restrictive factors, specially in the marginal areas. This partly explains the regional variation in the adoption rate. Adoption rate is less amongst the Southern and Eastern NGOs than the others. NGOs in both the regions had also indicated (*Table 18*) longer time span to create Self Reliant communities.

Table 25: Adopted New Target Groups (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Adopted	7	6	10	4	27 (56. 3)
Not Adopted	6	3	9	2	20 (41. 7)
No Response		1			1 (2. 1)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

5.7 Learning

42 NGOs indicated (*Table 26*) that past experience with communities helps them to work more efficiently with new communities. This is more true if the communities and the working conditions are more homogenous. In such cases many of the programmes and strategies can be adapted with few modification.

Table 26: Learn (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Helps to Learn	11	9	16	6	42 (87. 5)
Does Not Help	2		3		5 (10. 4)
No Response		1			1 (2. 1)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

Experience also helps them get result faster. 72 percent of the NGOs support this view (*Table 27*). More so in the case of Western and the Northern NGOs. Some NGOs felt that there is hardly any difference because each community is unique and past experiences hardly make any difference in terms of results and time. More than the NGO experience it is the community and local conditions that make the difference in terms of the results.

Table 27: Results In Shorter Time (number of NGOs)

Categories	East	North	South	West	Total
Results in Shorter Time	9	8	13	5	35 (72. 9)
No Effect	4	2	5	1	12 (25. 0)
No Response			1		1 (2. 1)
All	13	10	19	6	48 (100)

Note : Figures in parenthesis shows percentage.

5.8 Principal Factors Determining Achievements of Self Reliance

The distribution of responses indicates (Table 28) that the first major group of factors determining the achievement of Self Reliance are human resource, and the institutional base of the community. Literacy levels, skills along with the ability of the communities to work in a group and sustain their activity is important. Both this elements are important considerations amongst the Southern NGOs as compared to the others. This is also true in case of the Northern NGOs. The Western NGOs give more importance to the institutional aspect then the human resource base. The second important group of factors relates to planning, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilization capacity. Planning monitoring abilities basically reflects independent decision making capacities of the people. However these abilities have to be supplemented by the financial resource base of the people. The resources could be mobilized either internally, as indicated in the establishment of thrift societies or externally by linking up with the banks, government or other resource centres. Planning monitoring and evaluation is considered as important factor by all NGO except the NGOs in the West. This contradicts their concern for institutional base because without good PMES institutions cannot sustain. For the Eastern NGOs resource mobilization capacity is an important consideration. The third set of important factors are the levels of participation of the people, their motivation and commitment, conflict resolution capacity and capacity to handle external connections and pressure. The Western NGOs do not consider motivation and commitment as important. Other important factors identified are the levels of awareness related to resources and potential and identities related to origins, conditions and achievements. These factors are quite important considerations for the Southern NGOs. Resource awareness and identities are not considered as important by the Eastern and Western NGOs respectively. As indicated in the definition also, the economic factors do not emerge as an important consideration amongst all the NGOs in developing Self Reliant communities. However the role of Donors and NGOs with respect to their transparency, ideology, accountability has been identified as important determinants in creating Self Reliant communities. The impact of recent policy changes like liberalisation and structural adjustments have been considered as detrimental by few NGOs. However, the importance of the current decentralisation policies have not been mentioned by any NGO.

Besides the above mentioned factors the achievement of self reliance also depends on the nature and characteristics of the target group. The NGOs have identified critical elements specific to each target group which played important role in their case. However this factors are generalised and varies considerably across region and certainly do not encompass all attributes.

Faster Target Groups and Their Critical Factors

Faster Target Groups	Critical Factors
Artisan	Skills
Children	Curiosity, Simplicity, dedication
Farmers	Asset
Labourers	Deprivation (-),Hardworking, Motivation
Scheduled Caste	Social Dignity(-), Motivation(-), deprivation(-), Asset (-)
Tribals	Homogeneity, Identity, Institutions and Honesty.
Urban	Awareness, Interaction, Threats, Demands, Opportunities
Women	Solidarity, Honesty, Initiative,
Youth	Enthusiasm, Motivation, awareness
Rural	Assets Organisation etc.

Note :(-) indicated as negative

5.9 Target Group Performance

Based on the scores given by the NGOs effort has been made in this section to compare the achievements of target groups with respect to importance of various elements. The capacity of target groups (*Table 29 and Appendix 4*) to plan monitor and evaluate is high, specially amongst the Eastern, Southern and Western NGOs. Learning capacity and ability to take responsibility are important sub elements. However most NGOs acknowledge that there is still wide scope to make monitoring and evaluation more participatory.

Table 29: Ranks by Broad Elements

Elements of Self Reliance	Ranks				
	East	North	South	West	Total
1. Self identity	3	1	8	10	5
2. Assertiveness	4	4	1	5	3
3. Awareness of own potential/resources	7	2	4	2	4
4. Autonomous organisations and performance	2	5	3	3	2
5. Capacity to plan monitor and evaluate	1	3	2	6	1
6. Capacity to mobilise internal and external	8	7	5	7	7
7. Accumulation of physical assets	10	10	10	4	10
8. Linkage to and participation in second level	9	6	6	1	6
9. Representation and recognition by significant	6	8	9	8	9
10 Capacity to handle external connections and	5	9	7	9	8

The organisational and institutional capacities of the target group is also rated high by NGOs except in the North, where it is still weak. The institutional structure are participatory. NGOs have developed good leadership qualities .However the institutions are still informal without any legal recognition. In the context of the decentralisation process initiated by the government statutory institution is important for accessing government programmes and benefits. The institutional structures of the community is also poor in terms of specialised personnels. NGOs have not been able to develop specialised cadre from the community. Absence of such cadres also leads to dependency on NGOs. It may be for this reason most NGOs have indicated that they have to go back to the communities even after that have reached a self reliant stage. Human resource development ,which has been highlighted by the NGOs in their definitions, programmes and strategies need to take care of this lacunae. It is also important that peoples institutions should enhance their accountability to the people and maintain their independence from the political parties. Unless people are able to safeguard their interest the fruits of decentralisation will not reach the people.

Awareness of potential and resource is important element amongst the communities in the North and West. Most communities are concerned with building their own financial resource base for meeting their emergency requirements. The community funds may not be effective in terms of financing large scale development projects but it can be used as a collateral to access resources from other institutions. It was observed in the field that NGOs have effectively used this strategy and succeeded in mobilising resources to the tune of over 50,000 rupees from the community.

Identity related to origins, conditions and achievement is strong amongst the communities in the North. To some extent this is also true in the East. Gender and village identities is important. Villages are homogeneous social units inhabited by the people of same caste or community facilitating group solidarity and identity. Gender identity is mainly an outcome of NGO intervention. Most NGOs have empowerment strategies and programmes specific to women. The functional groups are mostly organised on the bases of gender. Ethnic, religious and linguistic identities seem to be weak. Majority of the NGOs, have secular agenda and do not organise people on the basis of religion and language.

Except in the West development and participation in the second level organisation is weak. This is reflected in the absence of strategies, related to the formation of, and networking with apex organisation. Most NGOs do not consider it as important because they feel that federations and associations are politicized and there is inherent danger that the peoples organisation will get co-opted by the vested interest.

Though development of financial resource base is a major concern amongst the communities it still ranks seventh in terms of their strength. Community funds are mostly generated through members own contribution and rarely through external resources. Most communities have their own bank account. Awareness regarding the government and NGO programmes is also good however their capacity to co-finance the programme is limited.

Most of the communities are still weak in terms of their ability to handle external connections and pressures. Recognition by the external agencies is also poor. However where communities are well organised they have started making their presence felt in the Panchayati Raj institutions. In fact access to and control of Panchayati Raj institution can be effective in empowerment of the people. Few NGOs have evolved strategies to this effect.

With the help of the NGOs some communities have succeeded in building and owning assets like centres, schools, dispensaries etc. But this is an exception than a rule and certainly needs to be strengthened. In fact, as indicated early, the strategies related to transferring of assets is still absent amongst many NGOs. Weak financial base also creates problem with regards to the maintenance of these facilities by the community.

Besides the regional differences the (*Appendix 3*) elements of Self Reliance also varies considerably across different target groups (*Table 30 & Appendix 6*). Self identity is strong amongst the agricultural labourers, artisans and the Scheduled Castes. Evolution of strong identity amongst the scheduled castes and agricultural labourers, (incidentally most of the agricultural labourers are the scheduled and the backward caste), could be because of their past history of exploitation in the hands of the higher caste and the landed aristocracy. NGOs have been instrumental in giving these community strong sense of identities which many, like the Mushahirs of Bihar, had lost. Development of identities and self esteem is important for communities achieving Self reliance.

Table 30: Rank by Broad Target Group

Elements of SR	Agri Lab	Artisans	Children	Disabled	Farmer	Rural	SC	Tribal	Urban	Women	Youth
1. Self identity	1	1	6	10	6	10	1	6	3	7	4
2. Assertiveness	3	4	4	3	1	3	4	1	1	5	7
3. Awareness of own	4	5	3	5	2	4	5	5	9	3	6
4. Autonomous organisations	5	3	5	1	5	2	3	3	5	1	3
5. Capacity to plan monitor	2	9	2	4	3	1	6	2	6	2	2
6. Capacity to mobilise internal	9	10	9	6	8	6	9	4	7	6	9
7. Accumulation of physical	10	8	10	8	10	9	8	10	10	10	5
8. Linkage to and participation	6	2	7	2	9	5	10	7	2	4	8
9. Representation and	7	6	8	7	4	8	1	9	8	9	10
10 Capacity to handle external	8	7	1	8	7	7	7	8	4	8	1

Farmers, tribals and the urban groups are more assertive as compared to the others. Planning monitoring and evaluation capacity is also strong amongst the tribals along with sound organisational structures. The urban communities have better participation and representation in the second level organisations as compared to the others. Women have better organisational strength and planning monitoring and evaluation abilities. This is also true in case of the youth. The scheduled castes have strong external representation and recognition partly due to reservation policy. Seats are reserved in the services and even in local bodies for them.

Comparison of the elements emphasized in the definitions ,programmes and indicators with the elements of the target groups shows some degree of similarity. However this cannot be said of all NGOs. There is still large divergence between conceptualisation and actualisation in the field. To a large extent this divergence is because of the diversity of factors affecting the community which are beyond the control of the NGOs. However in many cases it could be due to lack of clarity between theory, concepts and practise. Stated objectives may not have been internalised and translated into action through appropriate strategies.

5.10 NGO Performance

Based on the previous analysis certain performance indicators have been developed to categorise NGOs in different regions¹². It becomes clear from the indicators that the performance of the Southern NGOs is the best in conceptualising, operationalising and realising the objective of Self Reliance. The Eastern ,Northern and Western NGOs can be ranked as second ,third and fourth.

¹² Use and aggregation of indicators is questionable specially in measuring Self Reliance and then developing typologies. The method used here is simple and is not fool proof. More so because the analysis was based on mail questionnaire which has high probability of error. This is further compounded by variation in the sample size between regions. However this is a simple attempt to codify complex issues and give some scientific validity to the concept. This needs to be further validated by rigorous field work. At best the typologies are indicative.

Table 31 : NGO Performance

Indicators	East	North	South	West
Years of concern (6)	1	3	1	4
Specific objective (5)	2	4	3	1
Concern due to Target Group Demand (7)	4	2	1	3
Regular Discussion, Formal Evaluation, Joint PMES (8)	2	3	1	4
Joint Donor, NGO, Target Group Initiative (9)	1	2	2	2
Special SR Programmes (12)	1	3	1	4
Indicator Application (10)	2	3	1	4
Joint Development of Indicator by NGO & Target Group (11)	1	3	2	4
Generation and Future Development of SR communities (16)	4	3	1	2
SR Achievement Rate (17)	3	2	1	4
Clarity about Stage (above or below average)				
•above or below average (20)	1	3	2	4
•Difference between time taken to develop SR communities and completion of three stages (18 &22)	2	1	4	2
Target Groups Ability to Stand on Own Feet (23)	3	2	1	4
Adoption of Target Groups (25)	3	2	4	1
Learning (26)	3	2	4	1
Faster Results (27)	4	2	3	1
Cumulative Score	37	40	32	45
Ranks	2	3	1	4

Note: 1. Lowest rank is the best therefore lowest cumulative score also indicates the best.
2. The figures in brackets indicate the table numbers from where the information has been accessed.

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the above analysis that most of the NGOs are aware and concerned about the issue of Self Reliance of the people since last 9 to 10 years. This is more so in case of the NGOs from South and the East. The concern and initiative mostly emanates from the NGOs due to expansion of their activities.

The role of the target group seems to be more important than that of the Donor agency in SR related issues. In few cases the demand of the target group has also lead to joint initiative being taken by the NGO. In the Southern region the joint initiative by the Donors and the NGOs has also been reported.

75 percent of the NGOs have indicated the use of indicators for assessing Self Reliance of the target groups. Indicators have also been developed jointly in majority of the cases. Indicators however lack clarity.

Regular discussion, joint evaluation and monitoring has also been highlighted by the NGOs along with joint formulation of the indicators. However participatory monitoring, evaluation is not a part of the formal agreement neither programmed from the very beginning in most cases, except south, which appears to be the major weakness.

In their definition of Self Reliance most NGOs consider self management, decision making, institutional base, assertiveness and planning monitoring and evaluation capacities as the most important elements. Economic self sufficiency is not the sufficient condition for achieving self reliance.

Multiplicity of the programmes is common characteristics of all the NGOs. However in terms of Self Reliance, programmes related to human resources development, resource mobilisation, institutional development and PMES are considered important. The programmes related to economic development are considered secondary which corresponds to the definition.

Training and empowerment, specially of women and youth ,strategies are considered important which is a prerequisite for developing sound human resource base needed for sustaining peoples institution. Besides training they also emphasize community organisation. However, most NGOs do not ascribe legal recognition, building second level organisation and transferring programmes and tasks to the people as an important strategy. In the context of decentralisation efforts by the government, building capacities related to these strategies needs emphasis.

NGOs in all region claim to have generated self Reliant communities but the overall achievement rate is low. The achievement rate amongst the Southern NGOs is comparatively higher than the others.

Most NGOs acknowledge that Self Reliance can be achieved in phased manner. Therefore it is important to identify stages. Three important stages have been identified which can be categorised as formative, consolidation and autonomous. The time required in each stages varies. The formative stage is shorter as compared to the others. More than initiation and rapport building the NGOs seem to be emphasizing integration and consolidation of the activities. Total intervention cycle lasts 14 years with considerable variation between regions. Intervention cycle is longest in the South and shortest in West. However there is inconsistency in the length of the intervention cycle with regards to the stages (*Table 22*) and the actual time indicated (*Table 18*) by the NGOs to develop Self Reliant communities. This indicates lack of clarity in understanding stage wise development of the communities which is also reflected in the confusing set of criteria's used to delineate the stages. It is possible that NGOs visualise and realise the importance of stages but may not have implemented in the field. This is further compounded by the fact that compartmentalized demarcation of human progression is difficult as there are factors which are beyond the control of single development actor.

To most of the NGOs Self Reliance does not mean complete withdrawal from the communities. Self Reliant communities develop the capacity to stand on their own feet but they require constant support and guidance from the NGOs to sustain their motivation, confidence, achievements and capacities. However the extent of NGO participation in the day to day activities of the community decreases considerably in SR communities. They take up advisory roles in activities related to planning monitoring and evaluation, training, resource mobilisation, networking, documentation and research.

Successful completion of one project intervention cycle also helps NGOs to work more efficiently with new communities. However experiences cannot be replicated because of the variation of the context and communities. Past experiences have to be adapted and modified depending upon the local situation. To what extent NGOs share their learning experiences amongst each other is not clear from the questionnaires. But there is ample opportunity to do so and certainly needs to be explored.

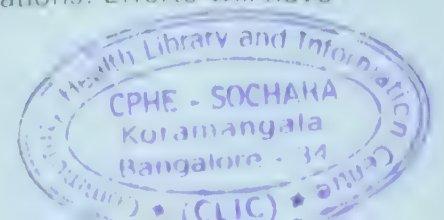
From the survey it is difficult to conclude the initiative of the NGOs regarding current decentralisation initiatives in the country. There are no specific mention to this effect. On the other hand few NGOs have raised concern regarding the negative implication of liberalisation and structural adjustment policies on the communities.

On the whole the Southern NGOs can be considered better than the other NGOs in terms of conceptualisation and operationalisation of Self Reliance objectives. It is therefore important to share their experience with others. There is some level of inconsistencies among NGOs with regard to SR concepts, programme and operationalisation strategies. Comparison of the conceptual and operational aspect with the performance of the target groups also reflect these inconsistencies. This indicates that NGOs may have thought of SR, but not conceptualised and internalised in terms of measurable objectives, in a systematic manner.

Based on the above conclusions it can be suggested that-

- There is a need to have regular discussion between NGOs ,Donors and target groups regarding Self Reliance issue. Regular discussion is also important to clarify and establish meaningful linkages between concepts, strategies and programmes. SR experiences varies between and within regions and there are possibilities of sharing these experiences.
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation though considered important is still weak and needs to be given importance. PMES training should be regular feature of organisational development. Such training should not only emphasize technical aspects, of how to do things, but should also clarify concepts involved in these techniques. The fact that many NGOs have poor understanding of indicators reflects this concern.
- There is also need to develop competent and specialised cadre of grassroots professionals to man the participatory institutional structures. The absence of which makes institutions inefficient.
- NGOs should also strive to make CBOs a legal and formal institution wherever possible. This enhances the entitlement capacities of the CBO and at the same time ensures greater accountability on their part to the people and to other institutions like the government. This will give them credibility. A legally registered CBO, manned with skilled people, will also be less dependent on the NGO.
- Training strategies need to focus on developing a cadre of specialised grassroots professionals who can man the institutions. Capacity to handle finance, administration, research and documentation needs to be enhanced.
- Economic development strategies needs to be strengthened. Along with production related skills it is also important to enhance skills related to higher economic services like marketing, finance etc. Most often IGP is confined to production related activities only.
- SR strategies needs to be formally programmed from the very beginning when working with the communities. The agreement should clearly state the time frames and respective responsibilities of each partners.
- As indicated by the NGOs the concept of stage is relevant. Stages needs to be more flexible. Time frame for the stages and project intervention cycle should take into consideration the differences in regions ,target groups and other local factors. Parameters programmes and strategies relevant to respective stages, however needs to be identified before hand.
- Transfer of resources and assets to the community should be clearly included in the agenda of the NGOs. It should be formally agreed upon by the community ,NGOs and other actors including the PRI. Transfer could be programmed in phased manner (along with the stages) and should be linked up with the development of appropriate institutions and cadres.
- Transfer of resources and assets to the people should also be supplemented by development of adequate community fund. In absence of such funds the maintenance and sustenance of such assets becomes difficult. Therefore development of community funds needs to be emphasized.
- In the context of the decentralisation policies NGOs need to develop strategies to enable people to effectively participate in the PRI. Legal recognition, bargaining and linking up capacities of the people need to be emphasized. NGOs need to realise that political empowerment of the community is important in order to access the benefits of the decentralised planning.
- NGOs also need to evolve strategies to enhance networking capacities of the people. In this context it is important to realise the role of federations and apex organisations. Efforts will have

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to be made to build such institutional structures which may have both economic and political utility.

It is important to emphasize that the present study is exploratory and has inherent limitations as indicated earlier. Therefore the conclusions need to be verified through systematic and rigorous field study. At best the present study raises issues and questions which need to be addressed through in the subsequent study.

Post Script

The survey of the NGOs reveals some interesting reaction on the study and also raises some important questions. Many of the NGOs reacted very positively to the questionnaire. They felt the study was interesting and helped them to clarify and conceptualise Self Reliance issues in a concrete manner. They were able to understand the hiatus existing between theory and practice of developing self reliant communities. These NGOs were able to appreciate the link between vision, mission, objectives, programmes, projects and strategies in evolving self reliant communities. In fact some NGOs filled the questionnaire as an organisational exercise involving all the members. It was an "interesting Exercise " to assess their strengths and of the community. Some did mention that the questionnaire should have also addressed "the NGO's Self Reliance and Self Dignity" as a catalyst organisation, which also emerged in the seminars.

However, the important question that needs to be asked is why nearly 50 percent of the NGOs did not respond to the questionnaire. There are possibilities that few NGOs did not receive the questionnaire due to change of addresses or postal problems but the number of such NGOs cannot be large. Moreover the NGOs failed to respond to the reminders through mail and also in the seminars in Delhi and Bangalore. Why is that the NGOs failed to respond? May be they did not understand the relevance and the need for such studies, or it was the limitation of the mail questionnaire research method, or they were doubtful about the motive of the study thinking it as mechanism to extract information from them and therefore an intrusion into their organisation. The questionnaire method has limitations and certainly may have posed problems for conceptualising and answering questions on a difficult topic like Self Reliance leading to weaknesses and inconsistencies in filling up the questionnaire. However the skepticism of the NGOs about the study also gets reflected in some of the letters accompanying the questionnaire. Comments like "I found the questionnaire very tedious - almost exasperating. Firstly, it does not take into account the fact that there are multi-locational, highly contextual and organisational factors. Secondly, in my view, it is a fundamentally flawed enterprise to try to make sense out of a complex phenomena like self reliance, empowerment, sustainability" reflects some of the concern. Such concerns and skepticism seems to have appeared, based on the letters and comments and discussion with individual NGOs in the seminar, due to lack of clarity of purpose and motive of the study. May be ICCO should have had a workshop or discussion with all partners regarding the initiation and purpose of the study before the research was conducted. Letter, introducing the study and the purpose of the study, sent along with the questionnaire seems to have failed to serve the purpose and the clarifications at the end through the seminar was quite late enough to rectify the problem.

For many of the NGOs it was a top down approach which violated the rules of partnership approach. Many NGOs felt that the study was the need of the funding organisation to serve their end and certainly not NGOs' requirement. Such concern certainly reflects problems of communication between the partners and needs to be addressed in future

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